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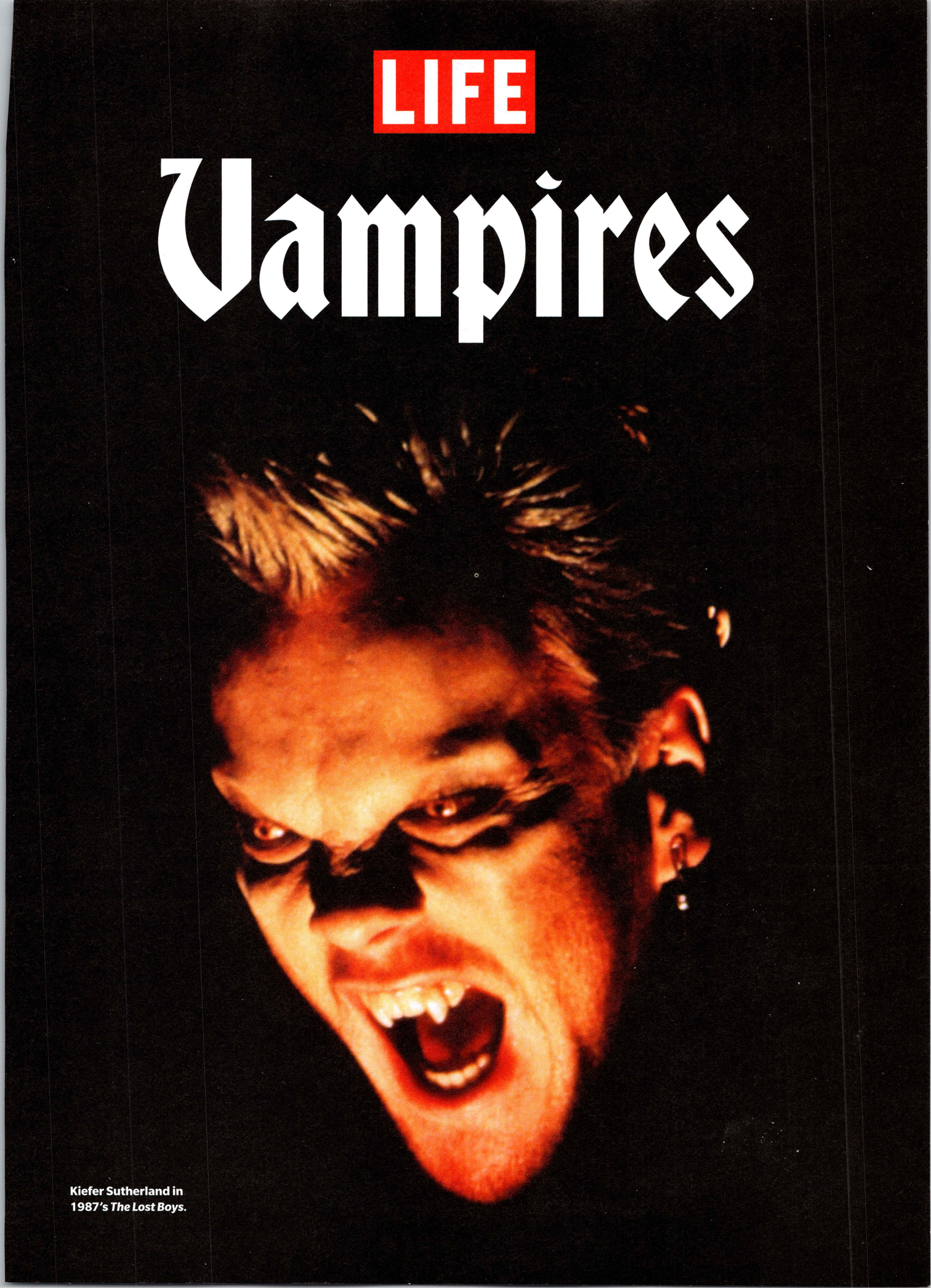

Kiefer Sutherland in 1987's *The Lost Boys*.

LIFE

Vampires

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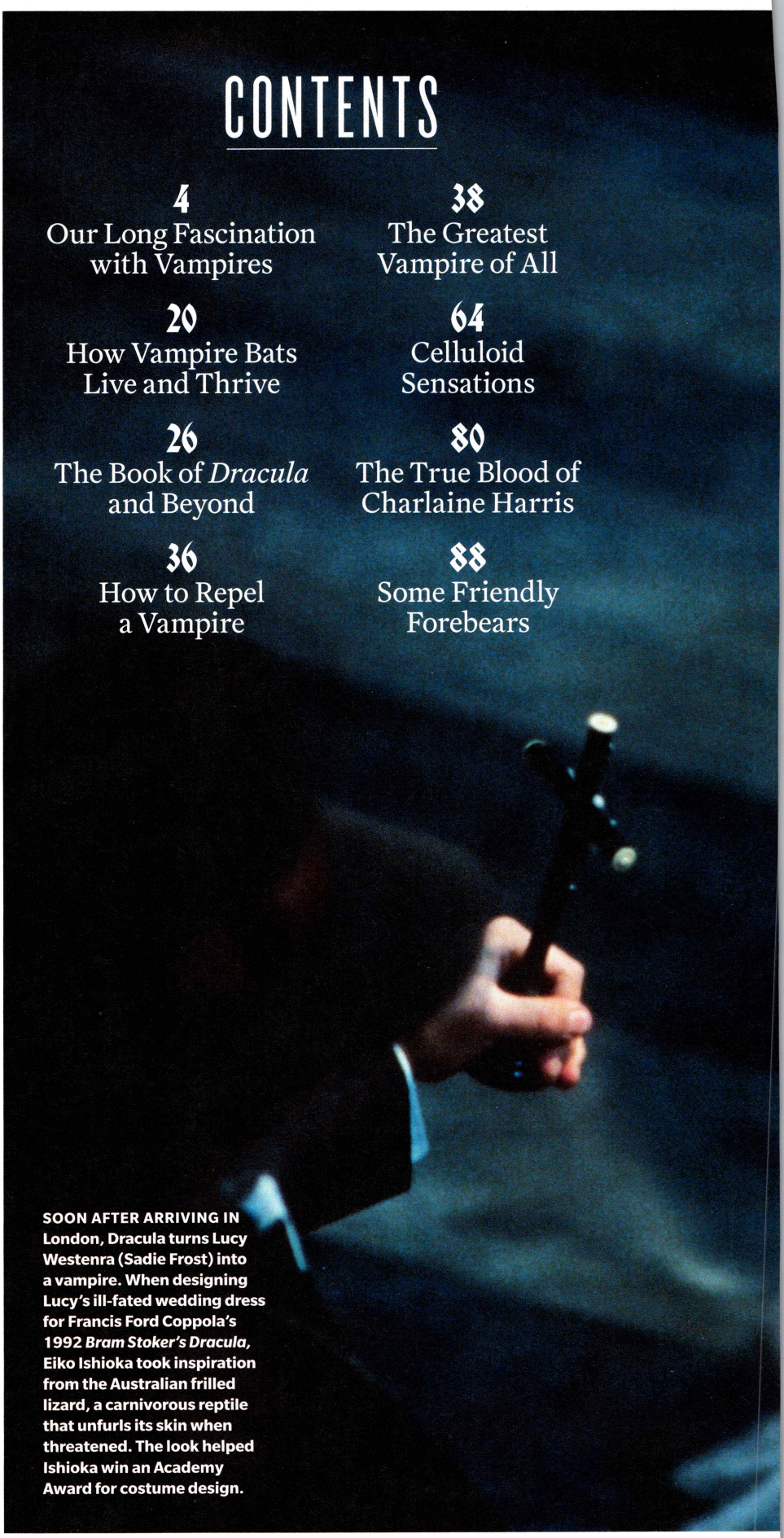


SOON AFTER ARRIVING IN London, Dracula turns Lucy Westenra (Sadie Frost) into a vampire. When designing Lucy's ill-fated wedding dress for Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Eiko Ishioka took inspiration from the Australian frilled lizard, a carnivorous reptile that unfurls its skin when threatened. The look helped Ishioka win an Academy Award for costume design.

Our Long Fascination with Vampires

For many centuries and across the globe, there's been an undying attraction.

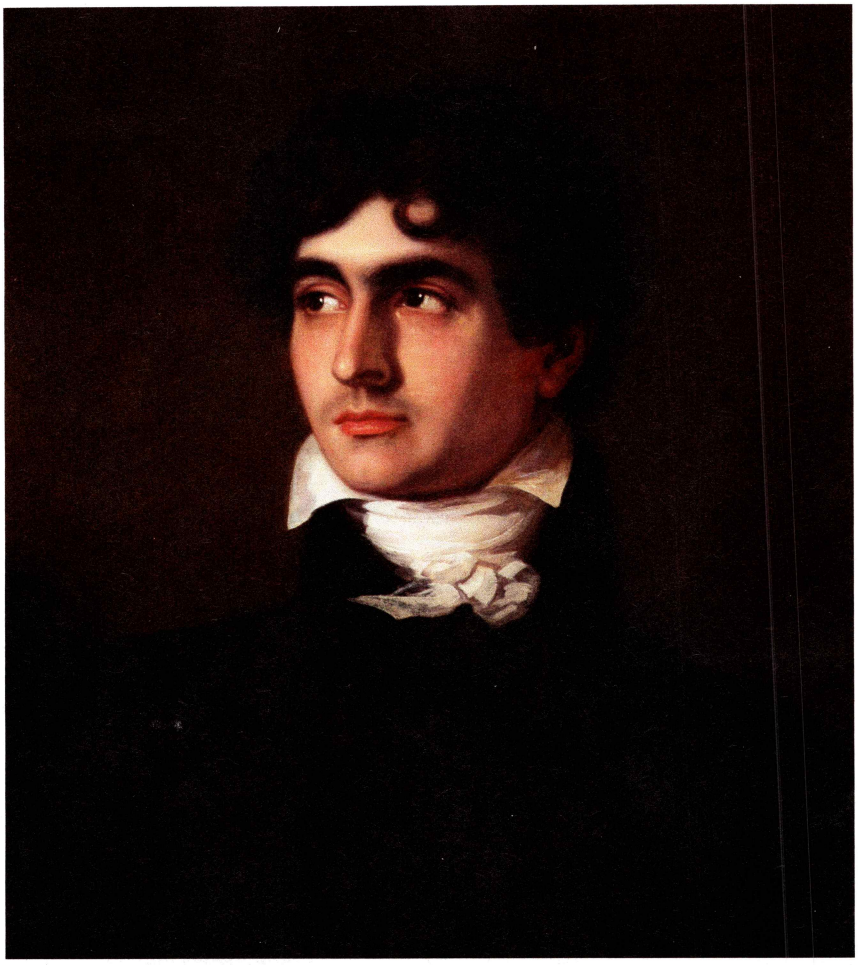
VARGO
05

The most consequential night in the history of fright occurred in June of 1816 at Villa Diodati on the banks of Lake Geneva, where the Romantic poets Lord Byron and Percy Shelley were vacationing with Shelley's 19-year-old fiancée, Mary Godwin, her half-sister Claire Clairmont, and Byron's physician and traveling companion, John Polidori. Confined to their villa by two weeks of torrential rain, they began telling ghost stories to amuse themselves. Three years earlier, Byron had written "The Giaour," a poem that warns of a corpse who, "as Vampyre sent," is torn from its grave to "suck the blood of all thy race." On this particular evening in Switzerland, he suggested that each traveler should produce a supernatural tale as entertainment for the others.

At midnight, Dr. Polidori recorded in his diary, as Mary nursed her four-month-old baby, the group "really began to talk ghostly. L[ord] B[yron] repeated some verses of Coleridge's 'Christabel,' of the witch's breast; when silence ensued, and Shelley, suddenly shrieking and putting his hands to his head, ran out of the room with a candle. Threw water in his face and gave him ether. He was looking at Mrs. S[helley], and suddenly thought of a woman he had heard of who had eyes instead of nipples, which, taking hold of his mind, horrified him."

By the end of that "wet ungenial summer," Mary Shelley had conceived

IN JUNE 1816, LORD BYRON rented the Villa Diodati in Cologny, Switzerland (below), where the English poet known as "mad, bad, and dangerous to know" encouraged his guests to ingest morphine. One evening, Byron suggested they should all write a ghost story, and the parlor game birthed two seminal works of horror: *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *The Vampyre* by John Polidori (right). Polidori's tale was the first literary take on the fiendish blood sucker.



the germ of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), and Polidori, then 20, completed *The Vampyre,* a short novel whose profound creative impact still endures in literature, theater, television, and film.

Polidori's vampire, the rakish Lord Ruthven—said to be based on Byron himself—is an amoral debaucher of young women with a "dead grey eye" who stalks London, drinking the blood of his victims. *The Vampyre* was delivered to the Countess of Breuss and pretty much forgotten until the spring of 1819, when, amid Polidori's acrimonious falling out with Byron, it was published in the *New Monthly Magazine.* To capitalize on Byron's notoriety, the publisher released *The Vampyre* under Byron's name. Polidori was outraged at this violation of his copyright. For his part, Byron disavowed authorship: "I have a personal dislike to Vampires, and the little acquaintance I have with them would by no means induce me to reveal their secrets."

Translated quickly into French, *The Vampyre* appeared in Paris as a popular stage play and gave birth to so many imitations that a decade later a critic complained, "There is not a theatre in Paris without a vampire!"

The film critic Manohla Dargis reckons that since the publication of Polidori's *The Vampyre,* all stories involving the creatures have been about repressed desire, untamed hunger, and the possibility of blood. In a *New York Times* piece centered on the film *Twilight,* Dargis wrote: "... the blood that flows from violently pierced necks... represents ravishment of a more graphic kind. This is the ravishment that, in its pantomime of seduction and surrender, transforms innocence like that of Bram Stoker's sacrificial virgin, Lucy, in *Dracula* into 'voluptuous wantonness.'"

Two centuries after *The Vampyre* hit the stands, we're up to our necks in feral figures who prey on the living—or

MARY SHELLEY'S PARENTS were good friends of the Swiss painter Henry Fuseli, who painted numerous versions of *The Nightmare* (left); a copy of the work supposedly hung in the waiting room belonging to psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (right). A vampire sucks the blood of a sleeping victim in the 1910 publication *La View Mysterious* (below).

shrink from them. Of all supernatural monsters, none is as boldly erotic as the vampire, who more often than not takes control of victims. "Dominance and submission come together," said Anne Rice, best known for her series of novels *The Vampire Chronicles.* The vampire must feed nightly, and he or she tends to attack his or her hosts when they're most helpless—usually, when they're asleep.

The connection between vampirism and the bedroom, while not stated explicitly, did not go unnoticed by Sigmund Freud, who, in 1896, the same year Bram Stoker wrote *Dracula,* started using the term *psychoanalysis* to refer to his new clinical method and its underlying theories concerning unconscious thoughts and motivations. Freud reasoned that every child goes through a series of fixed psychosexual stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital. "The name of each stage, apart from latency, highlights the area of the body which is then the main source of pleasure but also the main potential source of frustration," writes David Cohen in *The Psychology of Vampires.* "At the oral stage the baby is all mouth. He or she gets satisfaction from putting objects into it. Babies suck, breastfeed and bite. In doing so they pander to the infantile 'id,' which for Freud represented the wildest primitive instincts."

In Freudian terms, the vampire's problem is that he or she is a sadist fixated at the oral stage, and vampire tales

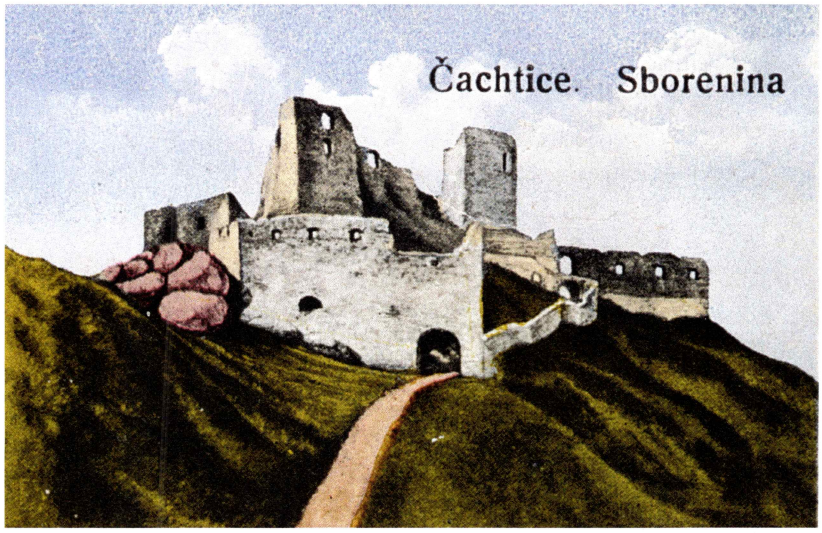
permit us to contemplate acts, desires, fears, and repressed impulses we're loath to admit to consciously. Cohen suspects that some of Freud's acolytes would take this to mean that "vampires wanted revenge for some trauma, which explains why they have to bite—the most primitive form of aggression."

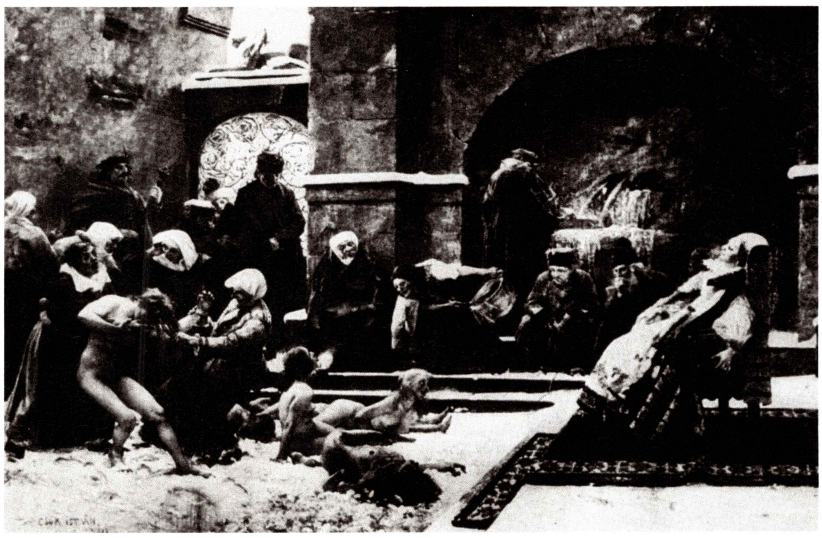
J. Gordon Melton, author of the monumental reference work *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead,* contends that the perceived eroticism of vampires makes them especially alluring to women, who outnumber men two to one when it comes to reading vampire lore and joining vampire fan clubs. Female vampires are so profoundly attractive to their male victims that the poor souls often wish to die to be with their devilish mates. At the same time, contemporary society is awash in so-called "psychic vampires" who drain emotional energy rather than blood and—by feeding on your eagerness to listen and care for them—leave you sapped and overwhelmed.

In his recent study *The Vampire: A New History,* Nick Groom, a professor of English literature at the University of Macau, argues that the vampire represents "blasphemous life, the life that is living but that should not be living." A vampire, he says, "is the thing that inhabits one's body but is not oneself." The spirit of a dead person, a vampire was capable of all sorts of wickedness, like changing the weather or preventing a farmer's cows from giving milk. As for recognizing a vampire, the late British vampirologist Montague Summers explained that the ghouls are "exceedingly giant and lean with a hideous countenance and eyes wherein are glinting the red fire of perdition... Cold as ice, or it may be fevered and burning as a hot coal, the skin is deathly pale, but the lips are very full and rich, blue and red; the teeth white and gleaming... Often their mouths curl back into a vulpine snarl." Sometimes, added Summers, they are reputed to have only one nostril, a down of hair on their palms, and a sharp point at the end of their tongue, "like a bee's."

More than 300 witnesses gave testimony against the Blood Countess and her accomplices, who were all found guilty.

That description didn't quite fit the Countess Elizabeth Báthory de Ecsed (Báthory Erzsébet in Hungarian), a royal beauty of the 17th-century Viennese court who became the world's most prolific female serial killer. As the would-be vampire aged, she sought the blood of young female virgins, which she believed would help her retain her youthful looks (she regarded the blood of virgins much as Cleopatra did asses' milk). The story goes that between 1590 and 1610, the Blood Countess arranged for hapless young women to be brought to her remote Carpathian castle and butchered for her pleasure. She purportedly oversaw the mutilation and murder of up to 650 "maidens," several of whom she dealt with personally. Her vampiric tendencies ranged from sewing up their mouths and tongues, to sticking needles into their lips or other body parts, to stabbing them with scissors and biting their flesh, to draining their blood and drinking it. Records in the Budapest City Archives indicate that some victims were covered in honey and live ants; others were burned with hot tongs and then placed in freezing water. In 1610, King Matthias assigned Báthory's cousin György Thurzó, count palatine of Hungary, to investigate the claims. More than 300 witnesses and survivors gave testimony against the countess and her accomplices, who were all found guilty. The collaborators were sentenced to death at the stake; Bathory herself was never tried. Thurzó convinced the king that such an act would damage the reputation of the nobility. Spared from execution, the Blood Countess was condemned to life imprisonment in her castle at Cachtice in Upper Hungary. She died there in 1614 at the age of 54.

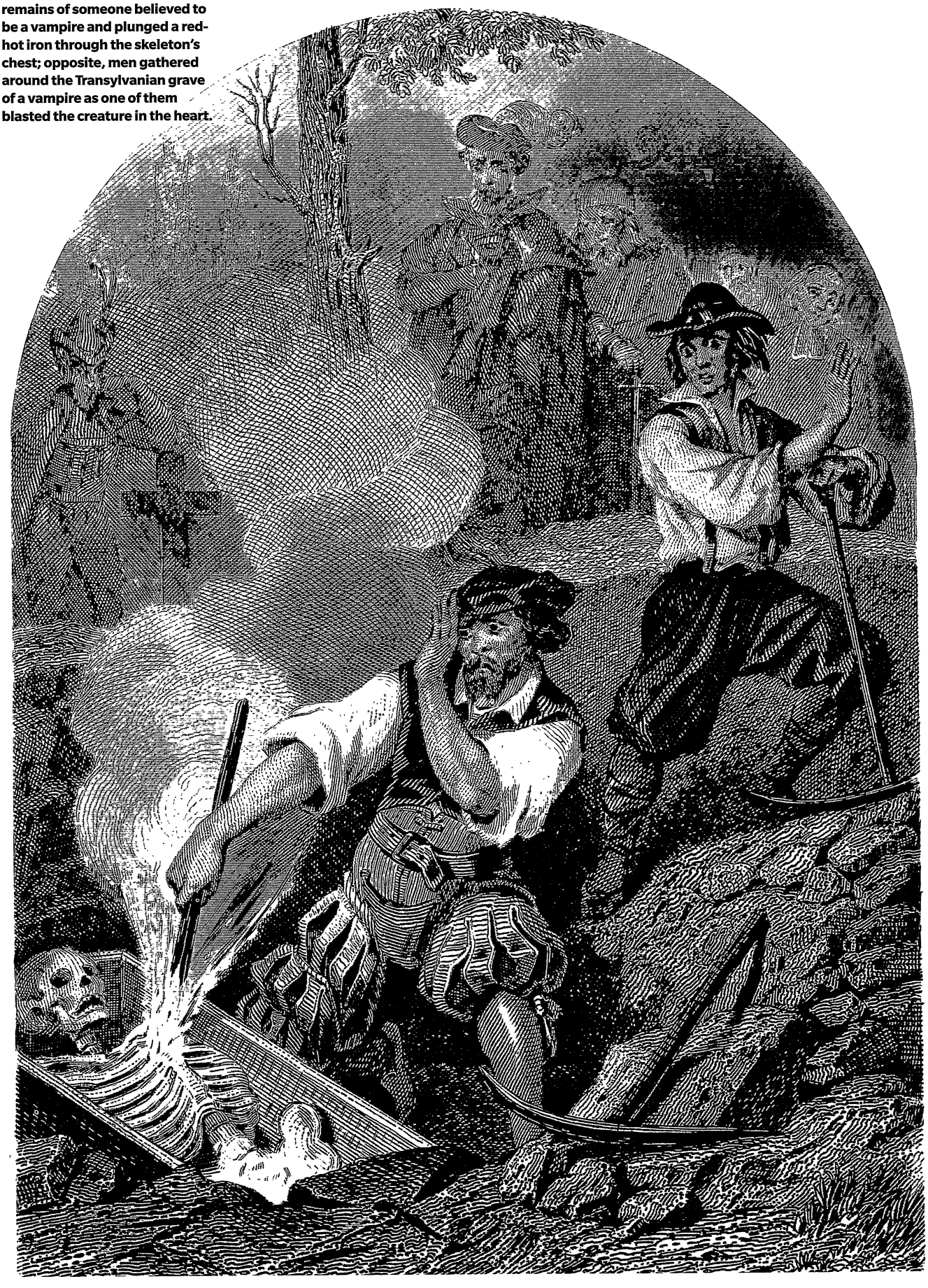




Similar stories about vampires have been circulating for thousands of years. In *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality,* Paul Barber tells us that folkloric vampires,

COUNTESS ELIZABETH Báthory de Ecsed reportedly slaughtered hundreds of young peasant women in the 17th and 18th centuries at her Slovakian Castle Cachtice (opposite, top). She enjoyed watching her victims tortured (opposite, bottom) and then bathing in their blood. Her atrocities went unpunished until she turned her sights on noble blue bloods.

IN BOHEMIA, LOCALS PRIED open a coffin containing the remains of someone believed to be a vampire and plunged a red-hot iron through the skeleton's chest; opposite, men gathered around the Transylvanian grave of a vampire as one of them blasted the creature in the heart.

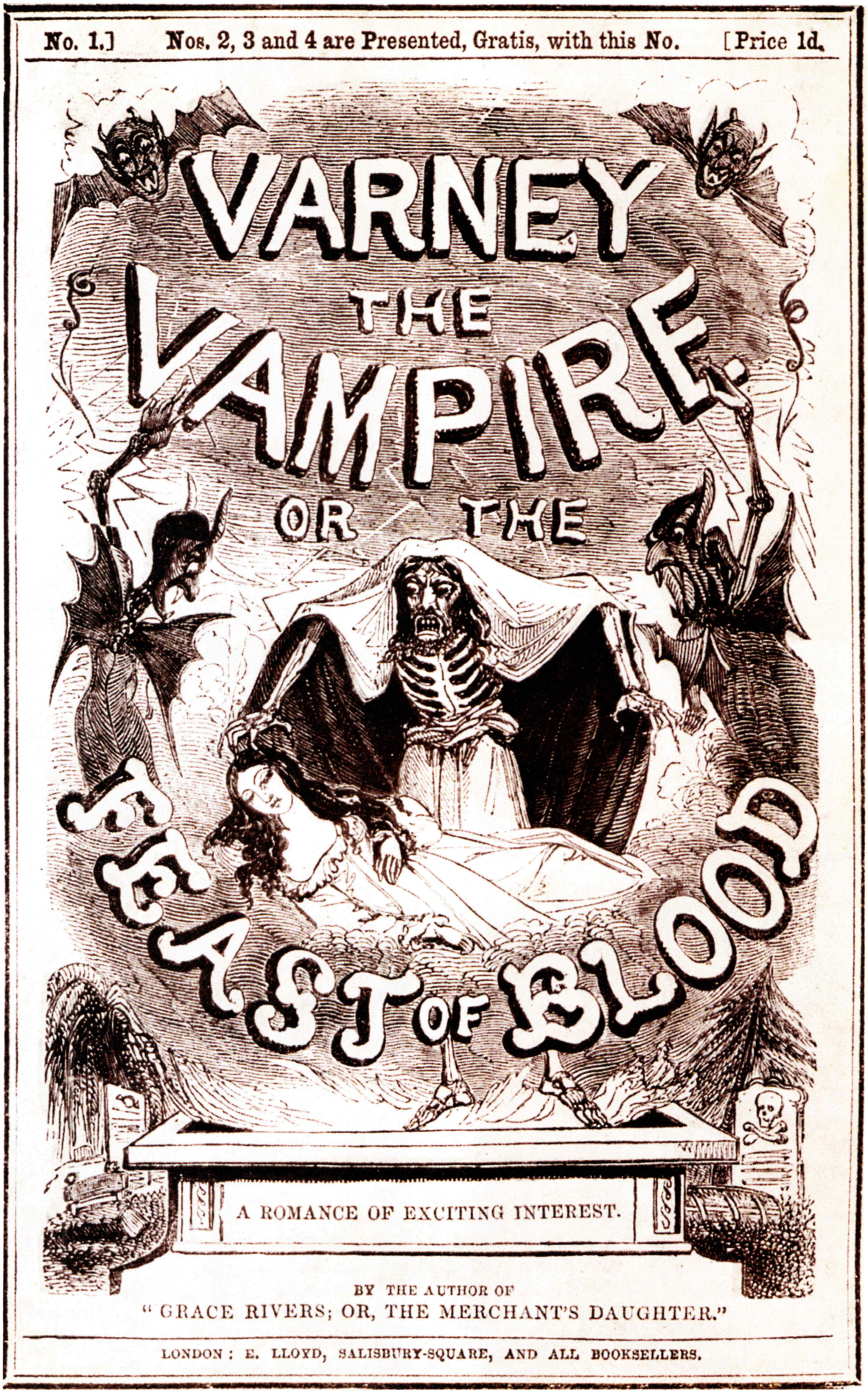


who flitted from India to China to Greece, are among humanity's oldest horror images: "dead people who, having died before their time, not only refuse to remain dead but return to bring death to their friends and neighbors." In ancient Greece, the decaying corpses of a warrior whose death went unavenged allegedly returned from limbo at night to torment his family. If his relatives failed to murder his murderer, the dead warrior would return in increasingly repugnant degrees of decay, effectively vampirizing his own kin. The undead (called *vrykolakas*) would kill them, suck their blood, and animate himself enough to go on to the hereafter.

In their sagas the Scandinavians refer to corporeally risen undead, the *gjenganger* and *draugr,* who would attack the living and spread sickness, madness, and death. "Already in the 12th century, the English were relating stories of the malevolent undead," said Al Ridenour, host of the podcast *Bone and Sickle,* a celebration of the intersection of horror, folklore, and history. "I'm not talking about ghosts, but physical revenants like vampires." William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum Anglicarum,* a chronicle of England from 1066 to 1198, mentions a lord who fails to make his final confession and dies, is raised bodily by Satan, beats villagers, and infects others. "Geoffrey of Burton relates an anecdote about some troublemakers who, once buried, arise by night to raise a ruckus, banging on the homes, shapeshifting between beast and human, and causing people in the town to mysteriously die," said Ridenour. "In each case, the bodies are chopped up and burned to end the troubles."

Though just about every culture has showcased some form of vampire, anthropologists generally consider them a Slavic invention. They haunted the lore of Albania, where they were known as *vurvulak*; Bosnia (*lampir*); Croatia (*vukodlak*); and Montenegro (*tenatz*). *Vampire* comes from the old Slavic word *obyrbi.* "If anything unites the pre-Serbian undead, it would be the spreading of a mysterious plague," said Ridenour. "The sickness was not passed on necessarily by direct contact or bites but could be more of an evil miasma that accompanied the undead rising from the grave." Plague survivors looking for a scapegoat would blame the first victim.

According to Ridenour, our modern idea of what constitutes a vampire originated in the early 18th century, when Austrian administrators in Serbia got entangled in some undead mischief that mushroomed into something now known as the Vampire Panic. "There were several waves of the Panic, beginning in 1718, with dozens of mysterious deaths blamed on recently buried villagers rising from their graves," he said. In 1725, a few days after the death of Peter Plogojowitz in the village of Kisilova, the Serbian peasant returned from the grave, appearing before his son and demanding food. Peter's son fed him, but the next night, when he returned begging for more, the boy refused. The following morning the son was found dead, and then nine neighbors died in short order, most claiming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in delirium that Plogojowitz père had returned to strangle them in their sleep. When word spread that the old man's wife had fled after her undead husband turned up to look for a pair of shoes, the parish priest and Austrian imperial provisor for the district agreed to witness an exhumation. To the horror of everyone present, Plogojowitz was not only completely intact in his grave, but his hair and nails had grown. A stake was hurriedly pounded into his chest. Only much later was it discovered that the nine townsfolk had died of pneumonic plague.

Outbreaks of vampire hysteria in the Austrian empire culminated in the official investigation into the case of Serbian *hajduk* (infantryman) Arnold Paole, who in 1727 returned to his hometown of Medvegia, near Kosovo, claiming that he had been assaulted by a vampire. He ate soil from his supposed assailant's grave and smeared himself with blood to stave off the attacks, only to die in a fall from a hay wagon a few weeks later. Within 30 days of his burial, four villagers had died, each with a small incision in his throat, the edges of which were purple. The consensus: This was the work of a vampire.

"The people, puzzled and eager to discover the vampire delinquent, at last recollected that Arnold Paole had often related how in the environs of Cassova, on the frontiers of Serbia, he had been tormented and worried by a Turkish vampire," read one early account. "This, according to the fundamental laws of vampirism, should have converted Arnold into a vampire in his grave; for all those who are passive vampires on earth invariably become vampires active when they descend to the tomb." From these humble beginnings sprang the legend of Arnold Paole, the first prominent revenant in the region.

A young girl from Medvegia claimed that she had woken in the middle of the night with a feeling of being suffocated. In the dim light she recognized Paole and cried, "Avaunt, vampire, in Jesus' name," and the vampire instantly vanished. To quell the resulting panic, 40 days after Paole's death, community leaders disinterred his body, which was bloated as though engorged with blood and seemed unnaturally well preserved. Traces of blood were on his hands, his shirt, and inside the coffin, and fresh blood spurted from his eyes,

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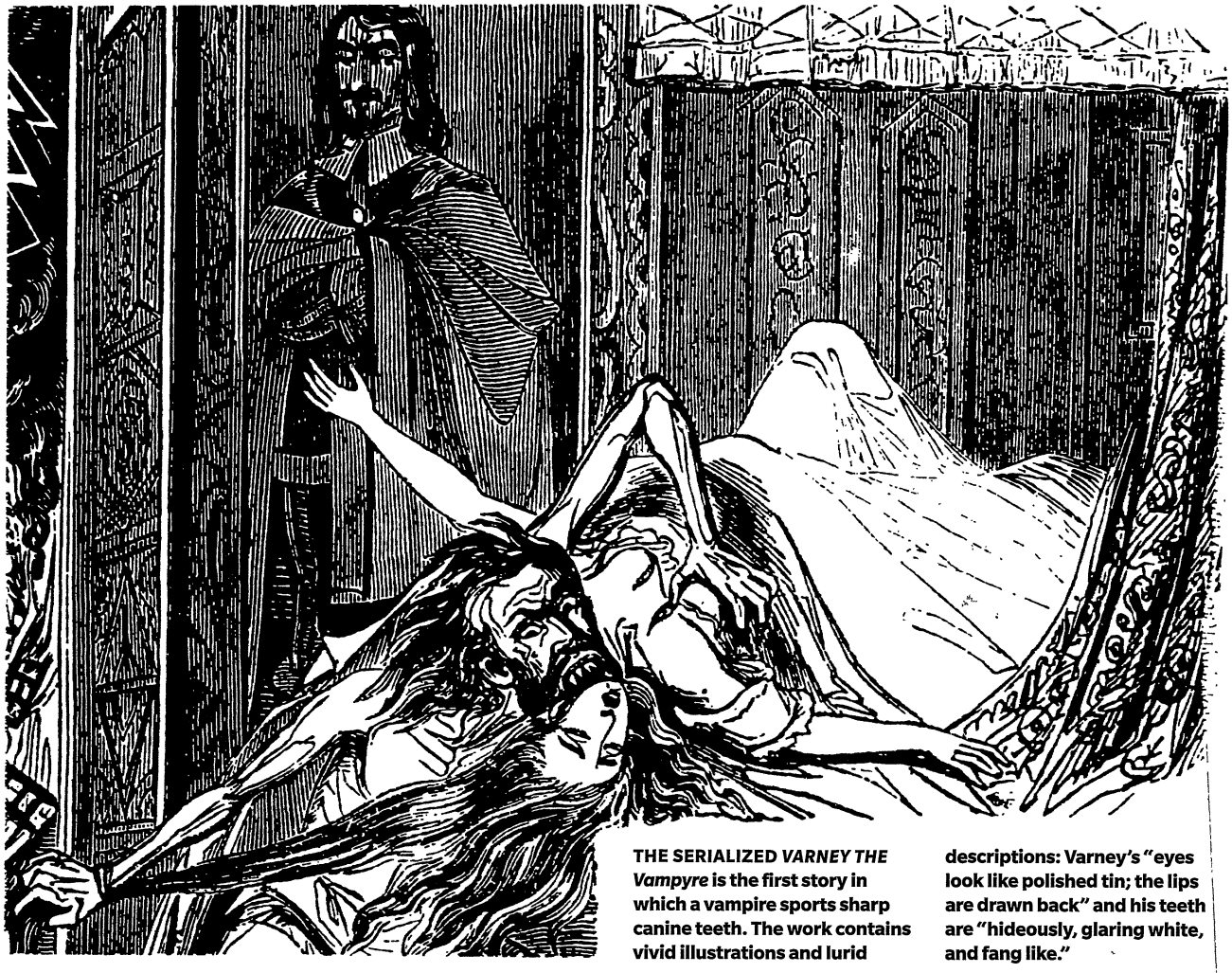


THE SERIALIZED *VARNEY THE Vampyre* is the first story in which a vampire sports sharp canine teeth. The work contains vivid illustrations and lurid descriptions: Varney's "eyes look like polished tin; the lips are drawn back" and his teeth are "hideously, glaring white, and fang like."

IN 2014, ARCHAEOLOGISTS working south of Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, found a medieval grave containing a skeleton of a middle-aged man with an iron ploughshare penetrating his chest cavity and shoulder bone. "We have no doubts that, once again, we're seeing an anti-vampire ritual being carried out," said archaeologist Nikolay Ovcharov, who uncovered the remains. "Often they were applied to people who had died in unusual circumstances—such as suicide."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

nose, and mouth—which may have later cemented the association with blood-drinking. While this was hardly clinching evidence that Paole was a true vampire, his heart was nevertheless staked, which provoked an audible groan, as if he were still alive. He also bled copiously.

The dead *hajduk* was then decapitated, his body burned, and his ashes scattered. A firsthand report by a military surgeon named Flückinger was published in 1732 and widely circulated in Western Europe, setting off a debate among scholars as to the existence of vampires. "The report contributed the stamp of scientific authority, which was helpful, since this is all taking place during the Enlightenment," said Ridenour, "but English and German audiences already had similar stories from their own culture, albeit without the blood-drinking or stamp of scientific rationality." Just to be on the safe side, the Vatican denounced vampires. Empress Maria Theresa of Austria was so alarmed that she mandated that suspects could no longer be dug up.

America's Vampire Panic ran from the late 1700s to the late 1800s. Cases were doumented in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island.

Paul Barber wrote that there's nothing spooky about corpses that lack rigor mortis, ooze fluid blood, and haven't decomposed. Gases released by microorganisms cause the body to swell; the blood comes from the lungs, which are squeezed by the bloating; and a corpse buried in the ground doesn't rot as quickly as one exposed to the elements.

And the groans? When a corpse is moved, Barber explains, the decompression of the chest forces air past the vocal cords in the larynx. "The vampire lore was a folk hypothesis intended to account for the events of death and decomposition," Barber says. "I don't think it shows any kind of unintelligent perception of the world. The observations are clinically accurate."

America's own Vampire Panic in New England ran from the late 1700s to the late 1800s. Similar cases were documented in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island, most linked to savage outbreaks of tuberculosis. In 1830, a "vampire heart" was reportedly torched on the town green of Woodstock, Vermont. In Manchester, New Hampshire, a 1793 heart-burning ceremony at a blacksmith's forge drew hundreds of onlookers: "Timothy Mead officiated at the altar in the sacrifice to the Demon Vampire who it was believed was still sucking the blood of the then living wife of Captain Burton," an early town history says. "It was the month of February and good sleighing."

"The belief that circulated did not involve blood-drinking corpses, but the notion that those who had appeared to die of TB would live on in the grave, somehow feeding off the lives of those in the community in the process, causing them to succumb to the disease," said Ridenour. There were at least 40 recorded instances in which corpses were exhumed, their vital organs burned, and stakes driven through their hearts. The most famous and possibly last of these was Mercy Brown.

During the 1880s, the town of Exeter, Rhode Island, was struck by an epidemic of consumption, as TB was then called. In 1883, Mary Eliza Brown died of the disease. Her oldest daughter, 20-year-old Mary Olive, died the following year. The entire town turned out for Mary Olive's funeral and sang "One Sweetly Solemn Thought," a hymn that she had picked out for the occasion. Not long after, the same

A 700-YEAR-OLD SKELETON discovered in Sozopol, Bulgaria (opposite), had been stabbed in the chest, pinned down with iron, and had its teeth extracted for fear that it would rise again. Following the 1892 death of Mercy Brown (above), her Rhode Island neighbors dug up her body, burned her heart, mixed the ashes with water, and gave the concoction to her brother Edwin, hoping it would cure his tuberculosis. It didn't. The townspeople then reburied Mercy in Chestnut Hill Cemetery.

illness struck Mary Olive's 18-year-old brother Edwin, a strapping store clerk in excellent health. He left for Colorado Springs to take "the cure."

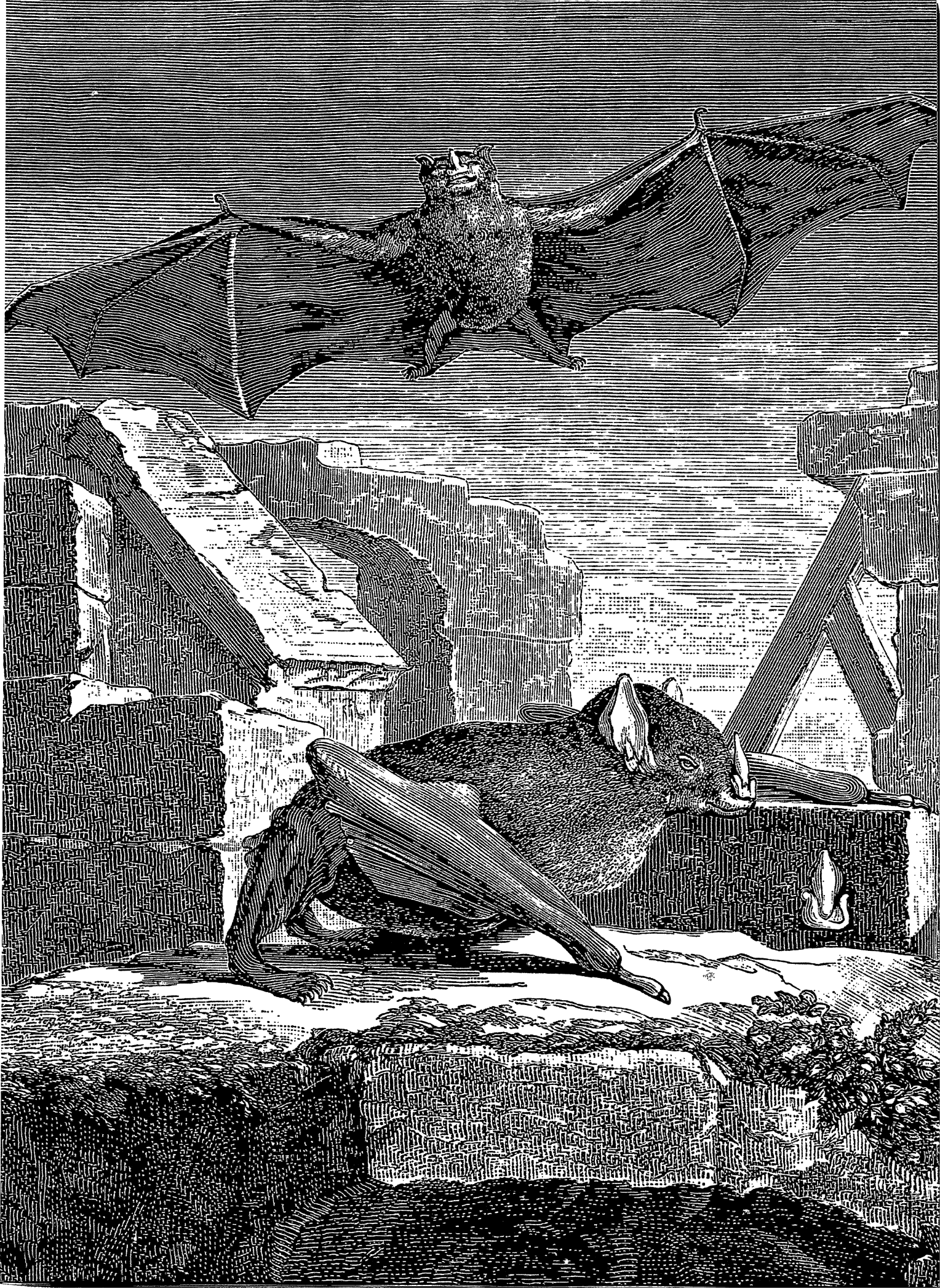
In January 1892, Edwin's 19-year-old sister Mercy Brown died. Then Edwin, having returned from Colorado Springs to Exeter "in a dying condition," according to one newspaper account, took a turn for the worse. As he lingered on, a rumor gained purchase in the tight-knit farming community that the Brown family was cursed, and that one of the women was in fact not dead but secretly a vampire who was feasting "on the living tissue and blood of Edwin," as the *Providence Journal* later put it. They persuaded the children's father, George Brown, to allow the exhumation of all three bodies. Wielding shovels and pitchforks, a party of men went to the family burial plot in Chestnut Hill Cemetery and dug up the bodies. It was wintertime, and the remains of the long-dead Mary Eliza and Mary Olive were little more than bones. But the body of Mercy—who had died only a few months before and was kept mostly in a crypt above the ground—hadn't much deteriorated. "The body was in a fairly well-preserved state," the *Journal*'s correspondent wrote. "The heart and liver were removed, and in cutting open the heart, clotted and decomposed blood was found."

Though the presiding physician noted the presence of "tuberculosis germs," the villagers interpreted the presence of fresh blood as a sign that Mercy was undead. To stop members of her family from meeting the same vampiric fate, they gathered firewood and kindled a bonfire on a nearby rock. Then they cut out Mercy's heart and lungs and burned them on the pyre. The ashes of her heart were brought back to the Brown homestead and mixed into a potion, which was fed to the ailing Edwin.

Evidently, the vampire remedy did little good: He died two months later. ●

How Vampire Bats Live and Thrive

Winged mammals with a very special diet.



To be fond of bats, the late humorist Will Cuppy said, one has to be terribly fond of nature. "He was right," says Juliane Diller. "I'm fond of both."

Diller is a biologist who wrote her doctoral dissertation on bats. Recently retired as deputy director of the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology in Munich, Germany, she now spends much of her time overseeing Panguana, the oldest biological research station in Peru, where she grew up. Spanning 4,000 acres in the Amazon basin, the private conservation area is home to 56 species of bats. By contrast, Diller says, there are only 27 species in all of Europe.

Panguana is inhabited by all three species of vampire bats: the common vampire, the white-winged vampire, and the hairy-legged vampire. The common vampire generally preys on large-hoofed livestock, such as cows, goats, pigs, and horses. White-winged and hairy-legged bats hanker for big birds. "Vampires have the most specialized diets of all bats," says Diller. "They dine on warm blood taken from a living victim. As a rule, they live in colonies of a dozen or so and hunt at night." Along with such alluring facts, numerous myths persist about vampire bats. Sometimes the truth is eerier than the fiction.

MYTH NO. 1: Vampire bats are native to Europe—and they're *big*. Although Hollywood depicts vampire bats as denizens of Eastern Europe, they only live in the tropics of Central and South America. "They are not huge or menacing, either," says Diller, who has a soft spot for vampires—and no, it's not on her neck. Of course, the bat's appearance seems to justify its reputation as a deadly villain with supernatural powers: Pointed ears, a wrinkled snout, a gaping mouth, beady eyes, and fangs combine to give the impression of directed hunger (or thirst). "It's a myth," says Diller. "They are only about three inches long and weigh just over an ounce, slightly larger than a mouse. They rarely threaten humans." And—Transylvania be damned!—there are no recorded cases of vampire bats morphing into people, or vice versa.

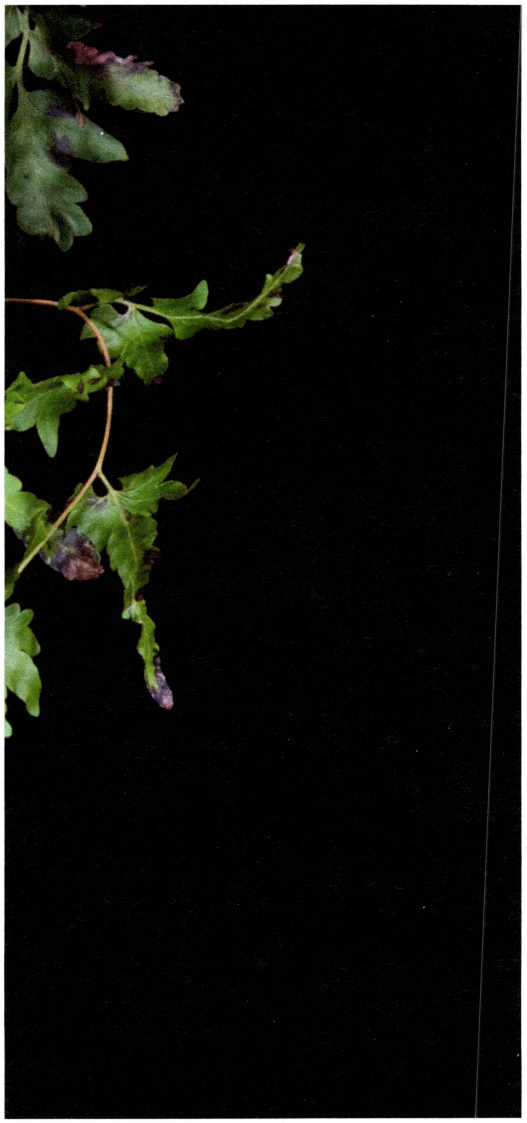
MYTH NO. 2: Vampire bats have a rich set of teeth and and chomp into their victims with their canines. "They have no grinding teeth, but they do have four razor-sharp, bladelike incisors in their upper jaws," Diller says. Pretty much every vampire film she has seen, except Werner Herzog's 1979 remake of *Nosferatu,* got it wrong, she explains. Indeed, vampires have fewer teeth than any other bats—after all, they don't have to chew their food.

THE COMMON VAMPIRE BAT having a snack (left) and roosting in a cave in Costa Rica (above). The bats feast on cattle, pigs, and chickens, detecting their prey by means of heat sensors in their faces. The creatures hop and creep over, pierce the flesh with their razorlike teeth, and then lick up the oozing blood. In a year's time, a colony of 100 bats can drink the blood of 25 cows.

MYTH NO. 3: Vampire bats swoop down on moving targets from the air. While bats are the only mammals with the ability to fly, vampire bats are also the only animals whose ancestors lost and re-evolved the ability to run. They attack by alighting on the ground, folding their wings tightly, and scurrying with a hopping crawl at more than three feet per second on thumbs, wrists, and hind legs, silently, like huge furry spiders. Though the bats favor resting, domesticated animals, they sometimes sample sleeping humans, often from an exposed toe. A vampire once nipped one of Diller's big toes while she was sleeping and took a long drink; she says the effect of the "vamping" was soothing, and she didn't notice it until the next morning. Her experience is similar to what happened in the 16th century to the Milanese merchant and adventurer Girolamo Benzoni in what is now Costa Rica. In 1565, Benzoni published *Historia del Mondo Nuovo,* an account of the 15 years he spent in the New World. Among his most vivid descriptions is an encounter with vampire bats: "There are many beasts which bite people during the night... while I was sleeping they bit the toes of my feet so delicately that I felt nothing, and in the morning I found the sheets and mattresses with so much blood that it seemed that I had suffered some greater injury."

MYTH NO. 4: Vampire bats suck blood. Diller says the bats have evolved a variety of physical abilities to aid in

THE 1899 ILLUSTRATION "Vampire Bats Attack Those Imprudent Enough to Sleep Without Covering in South America," by Oswald Levens (left); a hairy-legged vampire bat takes flight in Mexico (below). The species feeds mainly on wild birds but enjoys occasional human blood. Since they can go for only two days without eating, these highly intelligent mammals share food by regurgitating blood for hungry colony members.



the hunt for food. Infrared perception in their noses acts like a heat-seeking sensor that allows them to find blood vessels near the surface of their host's skin. Contrary to popular perception, vampire bats don't normally focus only on the neck of their victim but also sink their choppers into the fleshy parts of the body where the skin is thinnest and unprotected—the eyes, the anus—and, with a shallow and painless incision, remove a tiny divot. They let the blood well up in the wound before licking it up, much as a cat laps milk. Their tongues have grooves that bring blood toward their mouth by capillary action, and their saliva contains an anticoagulant protein appropriately called Draculin that prevents the blood from premature clotting that would seal up the wound. Twenty minutes of leisurely feeding is generally enough, but the presence of Draculin means the bleeding can last for hours.

Vampire bats have no well-defined large intestine, but their stomachs are proportionately quite large, with a coiled blind sac that straightens out when engorged with blood. Since the bats are relatively tiny, they can only absorb a tablespoon's worth, which is still a lot to draw from a sleeping mammal. Blood is nearly 90 percent water, and though it's high in protein, it's not especially nutritious—it has fewer calories than fruit yogurt. "After they drink, the bats have to roost and digest," says Diller. "During digestion, the blood thickens and produces a black, tarlike feces, the existence of which shows that you have vampire bats."

As you might imagine, vampire bats require far less blood than Count Dracula, who would have had to quaff five pints a day to meet his minimum daily requirement. (If he intended to

put in a full night of flying, he would probably need double that amount.)

MYTH NO. 5: Like Dracula, vampire bats are loners. If a vampire bat goes 48 hours without a meal, it dies. "So they have a strategy for staying alive when food is in short supply," Diller says. "Their social support network is almost altruistic. They perform extensive social grooming and exhibit a kind of cooperative food sharing." If food is scarce, the bats will regurgitate blood for others in the community unable to find their own source of fresh blood, like a hen does for her chicks. The difference is that the bats don't just feed their offspring; they also deliver blood meals to other adults in their roost that have previously helped them, whether they're related or not.

Vampire bats don't kill their hosts, but their spit is a vector for rabies, tetanus, and other diseases, so they are considered a serious concern of animal and public health, and their populations are reduced in many areas by poisoning. "This close cohesion and particularly the social grooming are successfully exploited in the fight against the vampires," says Diller. "If a single individual is coated with poison, usually the entire colony dies."

MYTH NO. 6: In Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, the count transforms into a bat. The cultural critic David Skal points out that that Stoker's use of the bat is fairly ambiguous: The shape-shifting winged thing that the Prince of Darkness becomes is described as both a lizard and bird. "Perhaps the most important stabilizing factor in the relationship between the theatrical vampires and bats was the 1927 Broadway adaptation of *Dracula,* at which early audiences hooted the attempt to depict the vampire in werewolf form with an unconvincing stuffed animal," he writes. "The taxidermist's beast was summarily withdrawn, and it fell to the bat to provide all the evening's animal pleasures—werewolves thereafter became a separate horror category." ●

The Book of *Dracula* and Beyond

Bram Stoker delivered a terrifying tale for all time.

DRACULA

6d.

BY

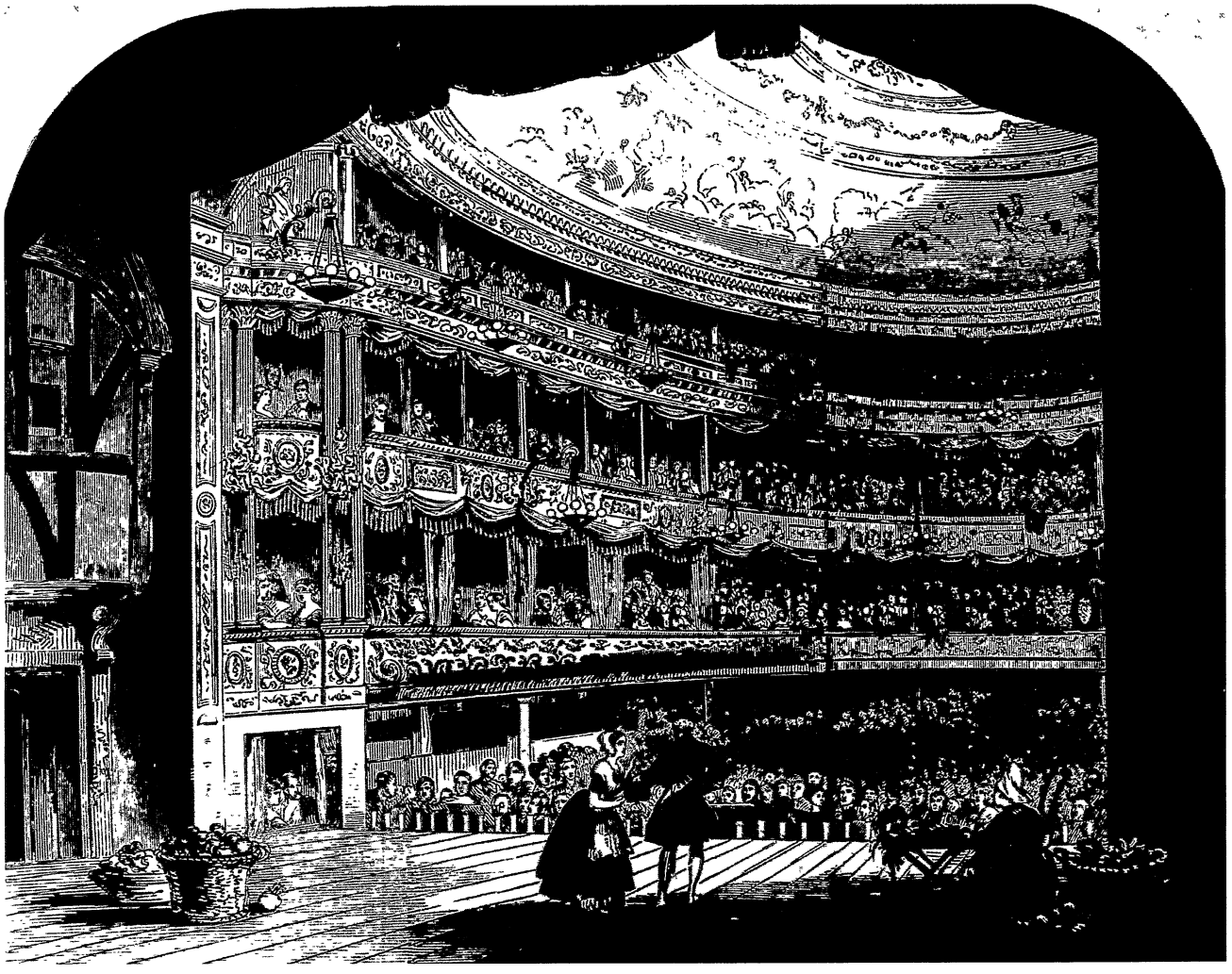
BRAM STOKER

6d.

WESTMINSTER

Archibald Constable & Co Ltd

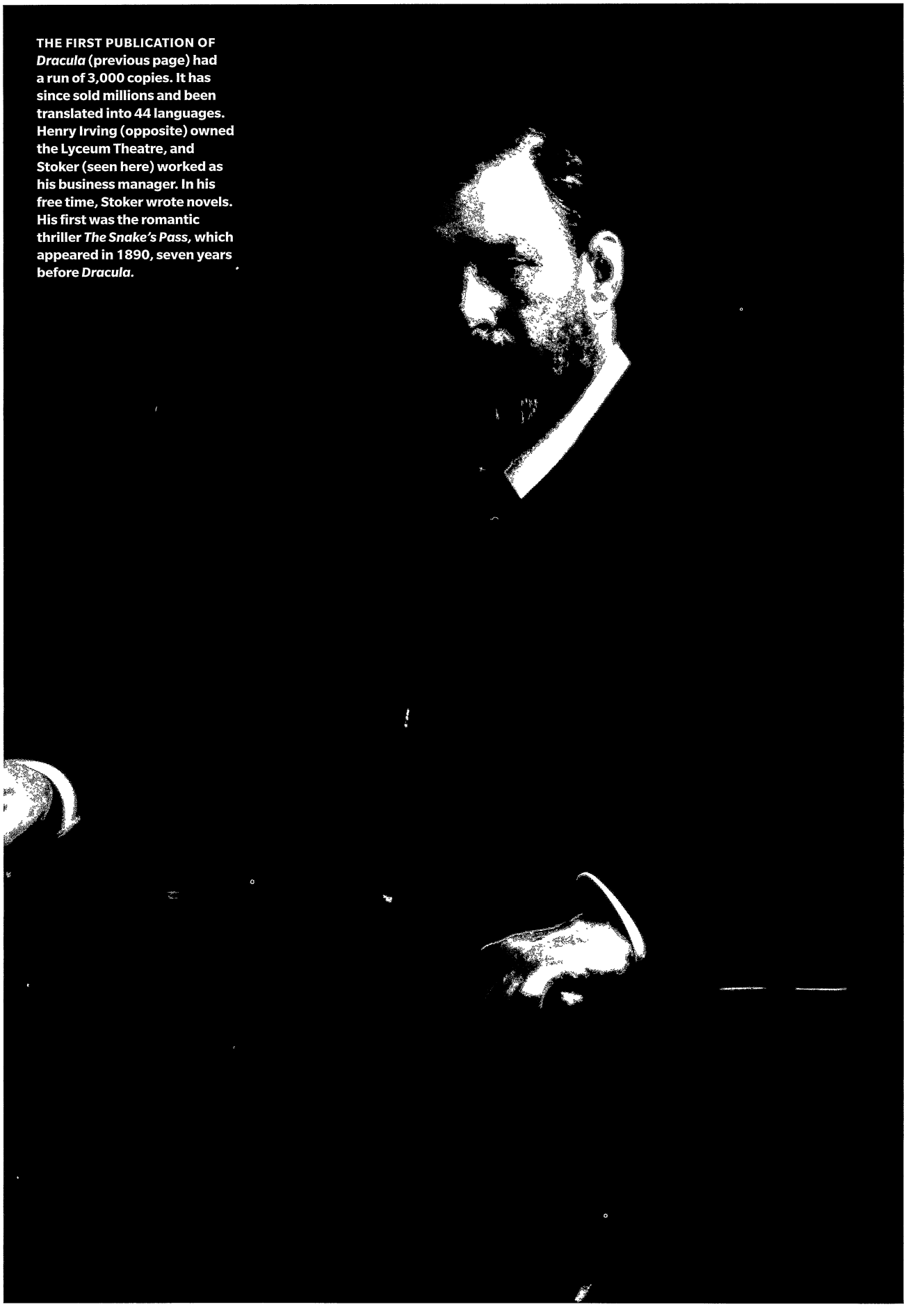
2 WHITEHALL GARDENS



Bram Stoker was a Victorian writer of alpha energy, beta character, and gamma judgment. He wrote 17 novels, romances, and works of nonfiction. Sixteen of them have largely been forgotten; most are excruciating reads. But in 1897, he published *Dracula*—the most durable classic of fang fare the English language has produced—and over the last 124 years, it has never been out of print. This tale of an innocent, unassuming Englishman who stumbles into the deadly world of the undead ushered in the 20th century, maintains the horror writer Stephen King, whose 1975 novel *'Salem's Lot* features a small-town antiques dealer who is the harbinger of vampirish evil: "We had such an influx of knowledge that everything was wrong. In the worst of all possible centuries, people would do anything... Dracula started all that."

A bloodcurdling yarn that involves driving stakes through the hearts of vampires and cutting off their heads to exorcize them, *Dracula* has been the hallmark of cinema from the earliest days of German Expressionism, and its antihero has been the subject of more movies than any other fictional character than perhaps Sherlock Holmes. The Carpathian nobleman born dead from an Irish author's imagination has enlivened everything from high art to comic books to role-playing games, to Halloween accoutrements to an aggressively sweet children's breakfast cereal.

Stoker's fictional Transylvanian count had a dark sexuality, an irresistibly debauched vibe: "Face was strong—very strong—quinine, with high bridge of the thin nose... the mouth... fixed and rather cruel looking with peculiarly sharp teeth." James V. Hart, the screenwriter for Francis Ford Coppola's 1982 film *Bram Stoker's Dracula,* has said, "This is a man with



THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF *Dracula* (previous page) had a run of 3,000 copies. It has since sold millions and been translated into 44 languages. Henry Irving (opposite) owned the Lyceum Theatre, and Stoker (seen here) worked as his business manager. In his free time, Stoker wrote novels. His first was the romantic thriller *The Snake's Pass*, which appeared in 1890, seven years before *Dracula*.

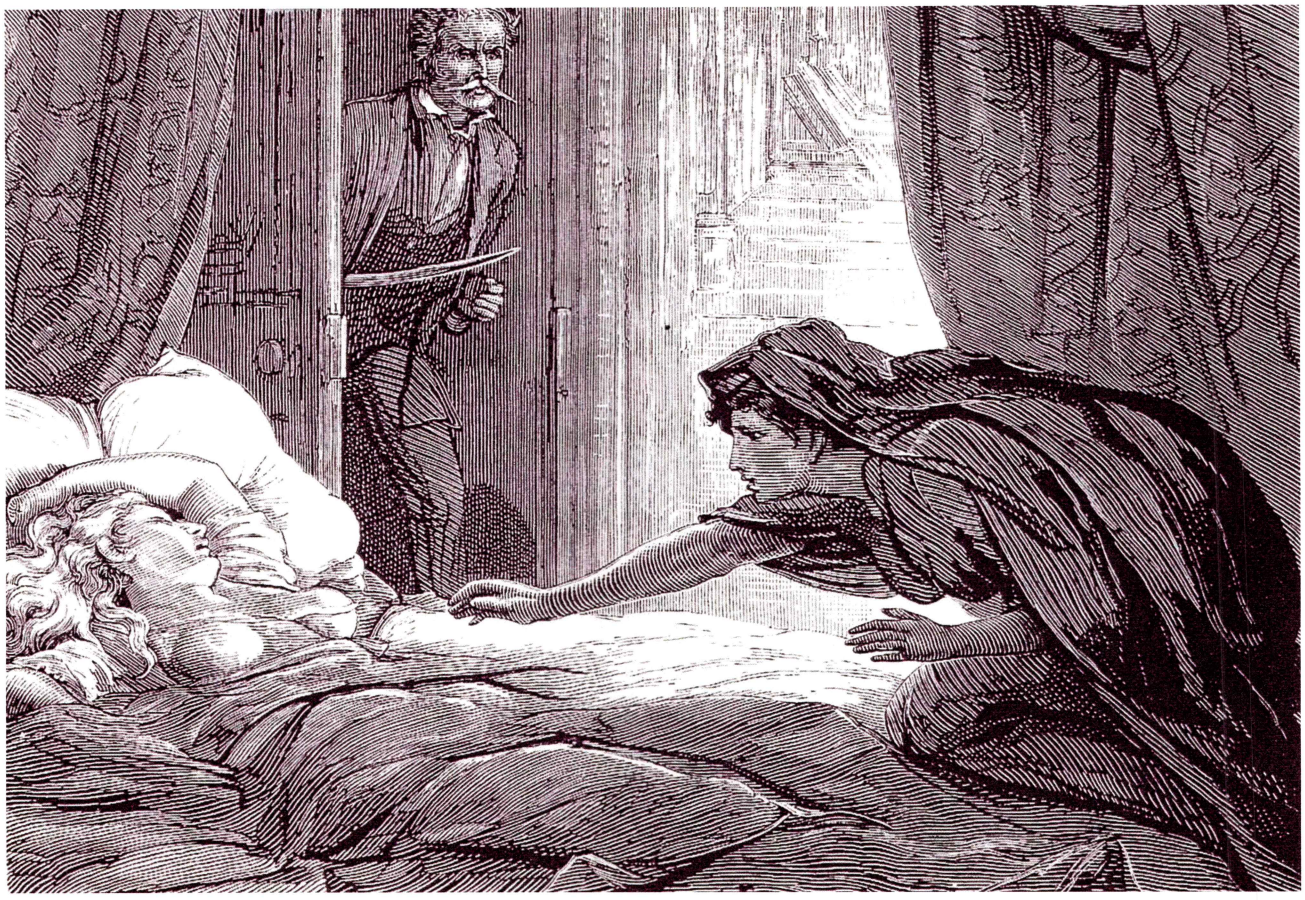
great pride, enormous charisma, who commanded nations, commanded armies—a very elegant, very proud man who went looking for love." In all the wrong places, we might add.

Born in 1847 (the worst year of the Great Famine) in Clontarf, a seaside bathing area of Dublin, to a Protestant family on the lower rungs of the middle class, Abraham Stoker was a frail child whose mysterious paralysis left him completely bedridden until age seven. The condition was treated by bloodletting—a method some scholars believe was the source of his fascination with vampirism. He was weaned on his mother's macabre stories about surviving the cholera epidemic of 1832: The sick had been buried alive for the common safety, she said, and the dead and dying were sometimes thrown together into burial pits, with live "corpses" struggling to emerge from their graves. Young Bram listened raptly to her tales of banshees and hobgoblins and looters who robbed deserted houses. On one desperate day, she told him, she had seen a hand reaching through the skylight. Seizing an ax, she chopped it off with one mighty blow. Of the boy's upbringing, Barbara Belford wrote in her 1996 biography, *Bram Stoker*: "He dumped the signposts of his life into a supernatural cauldron and called it *Dracula*."

Stoker eventually grew into a big, hearty, russet-bearded man and semi-illustrious sophisticate. At Dublin's Trinity College, he was an accomplished athlete and active in the school's Philosophical Society, where he sponsored the membership of his friend Oscar Wilde. In 1867, he saw a production of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* that starred the electrifying Shakespearean actor Henry Irving. Smitten with the stage, Stoker started writing theatrical notices for the *Dublin Evening Mail*. When Irving returned to the city in 1876, Stoker wrote an ecstatic review of his production of *Hamlet*. His enthusiasm was so great that the acutely vain actor asked Stoker to manage his company at the Lyceum Theatre, one of London's most popular playhouses. So in 1878, Stoker abandoned a quiet, dull career as a clerk at Dublin Castle, where his father worked as a civil servant, married Dublin beauty Florence Balcombe—whose former suitor had been Wilde—and joined Irving in England. Frequently neglecting his wife and their young son, Noel, Stoker toured the United States eight times with Irving, hobnobbing with literati like Walt Whitman and Mark Twain.

Endowed with enormous stamina, the furiously overworked manager ran the gaslit Lyceum during virtually all of the 25 years it was owned by Irving, suffering patiently the actor's fiscal extravagances. Their relationship was not unlike that of a shark and pilot fish, and echoes can be found in Dracula's alliance with the madman Renfield,

IT IS THOUGHT THAT JACK the Ripper, who killed at least five women in London (as depicted at left), inspired Stoker's *Dracula*. But vampire tales appeared long before Stoker's dark novel. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 take told of a lesbian vampire called Carmilla (opposite), a character who has become popular in fright movies.



whom the count turns into a vampire. "I am here to do Your bidding, Master," says Renfield. "I am Your slave, and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshiped You long and afar off. Now that You are near, I await Your commands, and You will not pass me by, will You, dear Master, in Your distribution of good things?"

Stoker used the tall, intense, life-draining Irving as the physical model for Dracula, and appropriated the count's long white hair from the silvery manes of Whitman and Franz Liszt. (The inspiration for Dracula did not come—as has been widely reported—during a tormented night caused by a too-generous helping of dressed crab.) In Belford's retelling, Stoker began jotting down notes for the novel in 1890 and took years to plot it. He started writing it in 1895, weeks after Wilde, a homosexual, was convicted of gross indecency and sentenced to two years' hard labor. In an essay titled *Coming Out of the Coffin,* Kaya Genc suggests that Wilde was perceived as a dangerous, appalling, but also fascinating figure "like Dracula, interpreted at the time to represent all things that undermined British civilization: Irish republicanism, immigration from Eastern Europe, and deviant, nonproductive sexuality. The vampire figure did not portray Oscar Wilde, per se: rather, it stood for all the fears and fascination Wilde inspired in British society."

Stoker never went to Transylvania, seat of Castle Dracula. He relied on a guidebook, a library, and his imagination to create the narrative.

Stoker initially named his lead character Count Wampyr but called him Drac in later drafts. He based the fiendishly ravenous aristocrat on gypsy legends, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's elegant lesbian vampire tale *Carmilla,* the famous Croglin Grange vampire in England, Jack the Ripper, and—if only for the title and historical verisimilitude—the sadistic prince Vlad Tepes, warlord of Wallachia (part of modern Romania) from 1431 to 1476. The son of Vlad Dracul (Vlad the Devil), Vlad III was prone to such horrendous acts as forcing mothers to eat their own babies, inviting beggars to feast with him and then locking the doors and setting fire to the premises, and skewering his enemies alive on oiled wooden spikes driven up the rectum (hence the sobriquet Vlad the Impaler). During one especially grisly battle, 20,000 Turkish captives were reputedly staked and displayed in a mile-long semicircle outside Tepes' capital city, Targoviste, to scare off the enemy. (It worked!)

Stoker never actually set foot in Transylvania, seat of Castle Dracula. Instead, he relied on *Baedeker Guides,* the library of the British Museum, and his powerful imagination to flesh out

the narrative. "The mixture of body, mind, and soul is what produces pure terror," opined Leonard Wolf, author of *Dracula: A Connoisseur's Guide.* Belford tells us that Dracula himself appears on only 62 of the 390 pages in the first edition of the novel—and not just as the count, but as a coach driver, a bat, and a dog.

Stoker tells the story of the novel through a complex web of letters, diary entries, telegrams, ship logs, journals, and newspaper clippings. The plot takes a digressive route from a lunatic asylum in England to Castle Dracula in the Carpathian Mountains. Its original title, *The Un-Dead,* was at some point changed to *Dracula.* "It was not known whether this was at Stoker's insistence

The story of Dracula is a "stew of obsessions and anxieties rich enough to withstand endless reheating... a parable of an empire and its decline."

or the publisher's, but the decision was fortuitous," writes David Skal in *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Screen.* "The one-word title itself, the three sinister syllables that crack and undulate on the tongue, ambiguous, foreign, and somehow alluring, was certainly a component of the book's initial and continued mystique."

Like all modern myths, proposed the critic Philip Ball, the story of *Dracula* is overdetermined and self-contradictory, a "stew of obsessions and anxieties rich enough to withstand endless reheating. To some, *Dracula* is an occult book informed by the late Victorian taste for esotericism. It can be read as a parable of an empire and its decline."

VLAD III RULED WALLACHIA in present-day Romania from Targoviste Castle (opposite). To discourage attacks by his Ottoman enemies, the 15th-century warlord dubbed Vlad the Impaler had those captured pierced on stakes. The contemporary engraving on the opposite page shows him lunching while his enemies die.

DRACULA: or THE UNDEAD

Prologue

Scene 1. Outside Castle Dracula

Enter Jonathan Harker followed by driver of Caleche carrying his hand portmanteau and bg. Latter leaves luggage close to door (C) and Exit hurriedly

Harker. Hi! Hi! Where are you off to? Gone already! (Knocks at door) Well this is a pretty nice state of things! After a drive through solid darkness with an unknown man whose face I have not seen and who has in his hand the strength of twenty men and who can drive back a pack of wolves by holding up his hand, who visits mysterious blue flames and who wouldn't speak a word that he could help, to be left here in the dark before a — a ruin. Upon my life I'm beginning my professional experience in a romantic way! Only passed my exam. at Lincoln's Inn before I left London, and here I am conducting my business — or rather my employer Mr. Hawkins' business with an accompaniment of wolves and mystery (Knocks) If this Count Dracula were a little more attentive to a guest when he does arrive he needn't have been so effusive in his letters to Mr. Hawkins regarding my having the best of everything on the journey (Knocks) I wondered why the people in the hotel at Bistritz were so frightened and why the old lady hung the Crucifix round my neck, and why the people on the coach made signs against the evil eye! By Jove, if any of them had this kind of experience, no wonder at anything they did — or thought. (Knocks) This is becoming more than a joke. If it were my own affair I should go straight back to Exeter; but as I act for another and have the papers of the Count's purchase of the London estate I suppose I must go on and do my duty — Thank God there is a light some one is coming. Sounds of bolts being drawn, and a key turned. Door opens

Karl Beckson of the *Washington Post* noted that psychoanalytic critics have had a field day with *Dracula,* which includes, "among other perversions, symbolic penetration when the count sucks 'blood/semen,' thereby confusing gender roles, and when Lucy, transformed into a vampire, simulates an orgasm when the phallic stake is driven into her heart." Still, Belford wrote, the novel lacks either real sex of lovemaking. "The most shocking scene," Beckson observed, "occurs when the count forces Mina, a vampire in the making, to suck his blood after he opens a vein in his chest."

Dracula has been much analyzed as an allegory of repressed sexuality, and it should come as no surprise that Stoker himself was a prude, if not an outright puritan. In 1908 he campaigned for censorship because "the only emotions which in the long run harm are those arising from sex impulses." Four years later, he demanded imprisonment of all gay authors in Britain. In his much-disputed 1975 biography *The Man Who Wrote Dracula,* Stoker's great-nephew Daniel Farson speculates that this sudden moralism was prompted by self-loathing and an attempt to disguise his own vulnerability.

At the time of its publication, *Dracula* got only a lukewarm response from critics, one of whom dismissed it as a "mere series of grotesquely incredible events." Stoker never lived to see the success of his most famous work. Irving's death in 1905—he suffered a stroke after finishing a performance of *Becket* at a provincial theater—seemed to cripple Stoker, and he never really recovered. He died after a lengthy illness seven years later, at age 65, before his story became an immortal part of English literature. Indeed, the papers barely had room for Stoker's obituary: News of his death was buried by accounts of the sinking of the Titanic.

Farson claimed his great-uncle succumbed to tertiary syphilis, possibly contracted from prostitutes. Belford, in her biography, attributes Stoker's death to kidney failure.

Whatever the cause, Stoker was a forgotten figure when he died, and his widow, Florence, was left in a precarious financial condition. She had to contest not only numerous bowdlerized versions of *Dracula* but the 1922 silent film *Nosferatu, Eine Symphonie des Grauens,* which she alleged was a bald-faced plagiarization of her husband's book. The motion picture was released by Prana-Film in Germany without Florence's permission, much less any payment. In her bid to have the negative and every known print destroyed, she waged a copyright infringement battle with what seemed like the entire stage and film industry.

The litigation over the right to use *Dracula* dragged on for eight years. Although Florence eventually won, *Nosferatu* escaped destruction, and its royalties provided her a consistent (though negligible) income. Skal concluded: "The single-minded, take-no-prisoners ferocity of her attack on the celluloid vampire may, in retrospect, speak volumes about the fanged she-demons Bram Stoker perceived lurking behind demure Victorian femininity." ●

THE OPENING PAGE FROM Stoker's theatrical version of *Dracula* (opposite). He insisted on holding a dramatized reading of the work at the Lyceum one week before the novel's 1897 publication to stop "play pirates" and secure the copyright. A poster from F.W. Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu* (above), with the cadaverous vampire Count Orlok played by Max Schreck, whose name appropriately translates as "maximum terror."

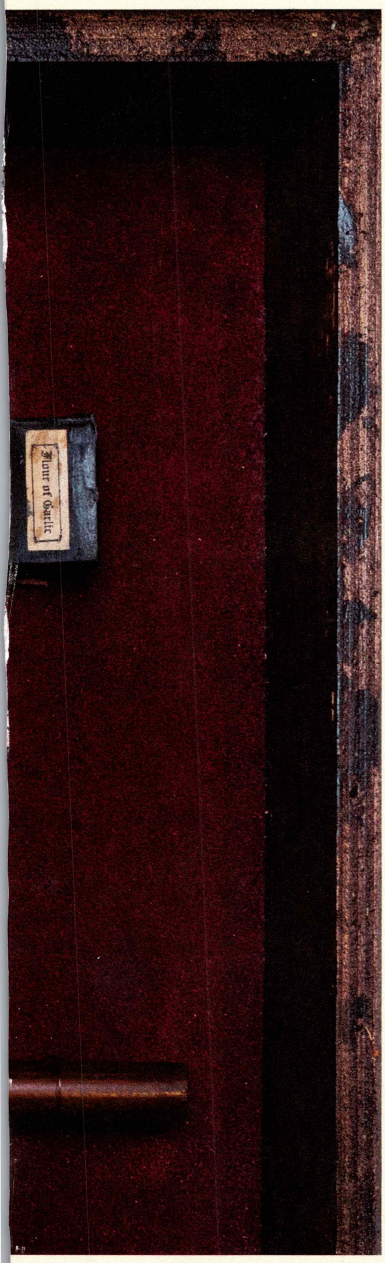
HOW TO REPEL A VAMPIRE

Is there a foolproof way to fend off a vampire?

The classic repellents are crucifixes, rosaries, and holy water. Wreaths of garlic festooned on doors, hung around the neck, or rubbed around windows and entrances will also do the trick. In 1998, Dr. Juan Gomez-Alonso, a neurologist in Vigo, Spain, hypothesized that rabies could help explain the supposed aversion of vampires to garlic. Vampires, he said, were really victims of a type of rabies called furious rabies, a disease usually transferred to humans by an animal bite. The symptoms: retracted lips, clenched teeth, frothing at the mouth, hypersexuality, and vomiting of bloody fluids.

Dr. Gomez-Alonso found that almost a quarter of men suffering from rabies tended to bite other people. "That almost guarantees transmission, as the virus is carried in saliva," explains historian Mark Jenkins, the author of *Vampire Forensics*. "Infected people display a hypersensitive response to any pronounced olfactory stimulation, which would naturally include the pungent smell of garlic."

Rabies might also help explain the vampiric aversion to sunlight and mirrors. (In some cultures, vampires have no reflection and cast no shadow.) Jenkins writes: "Strong odors or visual stimuli trigger spasms of the face and vocal muscles of those with rabies, and this in turn induces hoarse groans, bared teeth, and a bloody frothing at the mouth. What rabies sufferer would not shrink from such a reflection?" Daylight might only compound the problem.



Rose garlands and the yellow flowers of Eurasian herb wolfsbane (also known as monkshood) presumably had anti-vampire properties similar to garlic's, and communion wafers strewn across window sills were said to offer impassable barriers. Bram Stoker's Dracula couldn't cross running water unless it was high or low tide, nor could he enter a house unless ingress was allowed by the occupant. And he could be slain easily with two daggers.

One of the nastier 17th-century vampiric variants was the *Nachzehrer,* described in a 1679 tract titled *De Masticatione Mortuorum* (*On the Chewing Dead*). Wrote Jenkins: "This volume described the Nachzehrer—German for 'after-devourer,' a kind of mindless, vampire-like corpse that chews its shroud in the grave before consuming its own fingers. As it nibbles away, by some occult process, it also slowly kills the surviving members of its family. It may then begin gobbling corpses in neighboring graves."

The most reliable ways to stop a Nachzehrer cadaver from reanimating were to place a mound of dirt under the chin in the coffin, tie a handkerchief tightly around the throat, or insert a brick, stone, or coin between the corpse's teeth. Another solution was to bury the suspected vampire face down—that way, if the fiend tried to dig its way out, it would only dig deeper.

The Romani people kept vampires out of the coffins of the recently deceased by providing the corpse with a candle, a coin, and a towel. To keep vampires at bay and literally nail them into the grave, steel or iron needles were driven into a corpse's heart, and shards of steel were placed in the mouth, over the eyes, and between the fingers. Hawthorn was stuffed into the undead's socks and hawthorn stakes hammered through the legs.

Though plunging a wooden stake into the heart of a potential vampire was an accepted practice, the mouth was targeted in Russia and northern Germany, and the stomach in certain Slavic regions. Chopping off heads and cutting out hearts no doubt led to more restful nights in Eastern Europe, but bear in mind that revenants, like octopuses, can regenerate. The folklorist Paul Barber recommended burying the head a long way from the body and boiling the heart in a fine Burgundy.

EVERYTHING A VAMPIRE KILLER needs can be found in Professor Blomberg's New Improved Accouterments (above), a 19th-century kit complete with a cross, a gun, a mold to fashion silver bullets, holy water, a wooden stake, and garlic. The good professor noted that these items are necessary for those traveling "where the populace are plagued with a particular manifestation of evil known as Vampires." A similar 19th-century box with later additions (right) sold for more than $8,000 in 2010.

The Greatest Vampire of All

Bela Lugosi brought Dracula to life, and to immortality.

LUGOSI IN 1931, IN HIS MOST famous role (previous page). A dapper young Lugosi (above) in the early 1900s. He performed at Budapest's National Theatre (right) from 1913 to 1919 and then moved to Germany, where he appeared in such films as 1920's *The Deerslayer*, playing the Mohican Chingachgook (opposite).

Even on a bright spring day, the funeral chapel known as the Grotto at Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City, California, has the forbidding quality of a cave of bloodthirsty bats. Embedded in the grass near the entrance to this man-made cavern, in a city of the dead awash with crosses, is a stark gray and black marker bearing the name of America's foremost vampire: Bela Lugosi. "To die," he mused as Dracula, "to be really dead, that might be glorious." As it turned out, Lugosi died not one but dozens of premature deaths.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of Lugosi's most famous film, Tod Browning's *Dracula,* which defined the creepy legend for generations of moviegoers and set the boundaries that other films and books have either swooned toward or recoiled from. *Dracula* may well be the most influential bad movie in the history of cinema. And of the hundreds of actors who have portrayed the Prince of Darkness, Lugosi remains the most vivid, a mad midnight monster who robbed maidens—and sometimes their swains—of their purity and doomed them to an eternity of degradation as his slaves.

With his scorching stare and continental sophistication, Lugosi made an impact that few actors have equalled before or since, wrapping his thick, melodious Hungarian accent around lines like "Listen to them... Children of the night... What music they make." Together with Boris Karloff, he reigned as the royalty of American horror films for two decades. Today, 65 years after his death, no one who portrays Dracula can escape being influenced by or compared to the poetically intense Lugosi. In his riveting history of horror, *The Monster Show,* David Skal calls him "the first monster, the fear that preceded fear, that shadowy harbinger of the Depression that was now at every throat. Millions already knew that they were no longer in control of their lives; the economic strings were being pulled by faceless, frightening forces." If that force had a face, writes Skal, it

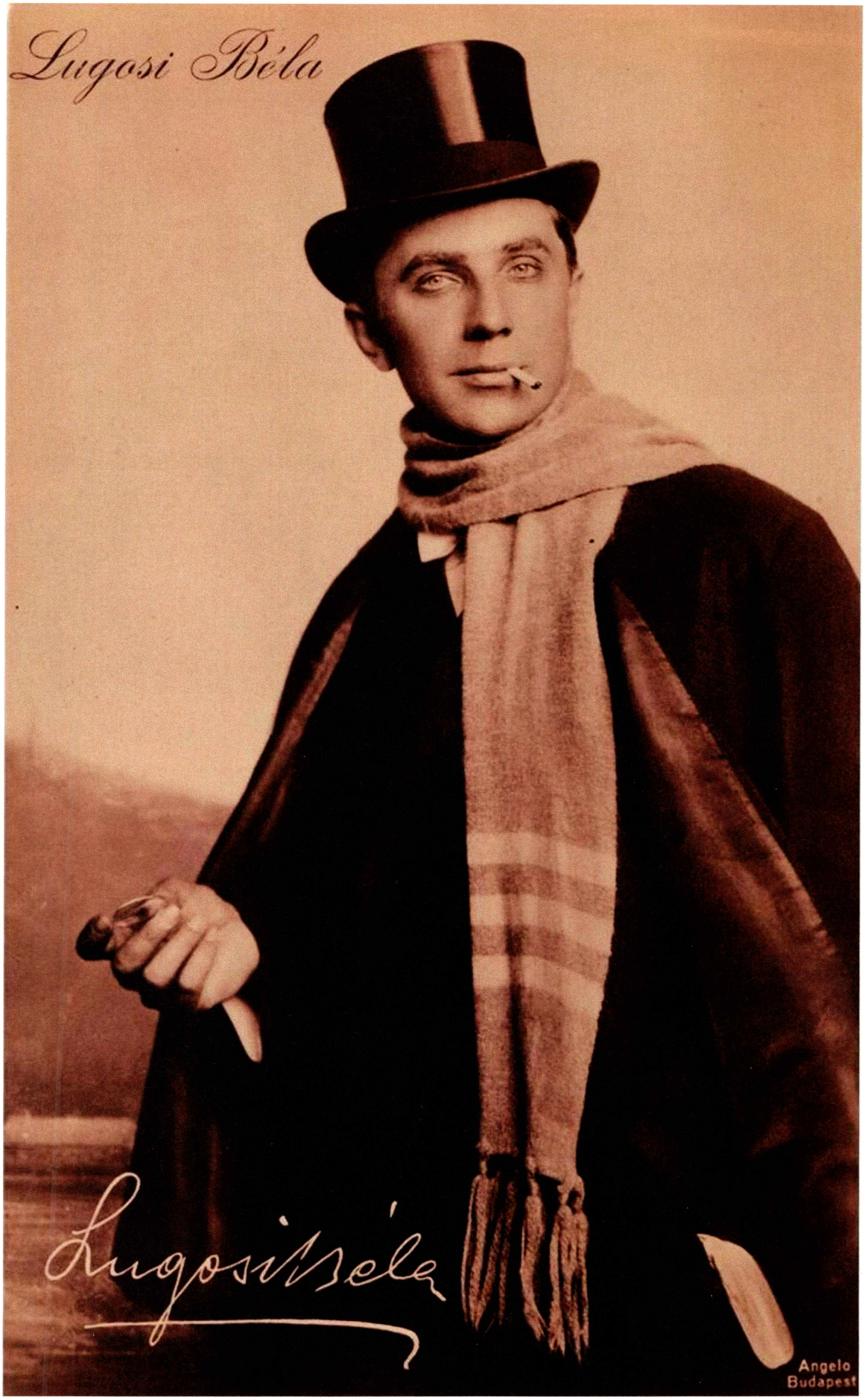
was likely to be Lugosi's.

Imperious, temperamental, and outrageously chauvinistic, the grand ghoul was also courageous, whip-smart, and very, very funny. He was wide as a coffin, and his crystalline blue eyes contemplated a world that was curious, beastly, deranged, and even loathsome. With his florid acting style, weird arhythmic line readings, and macabre mannerisms, he seemed genuinely possessed. It has been said that Lugosi's most famous utterance—the halting "I... am... Dra-cu-la"—was less introduction than assertion. A posthumous litigation involving his heirs over Dracula merchandise that employed Lugosi's distinctive countenance brought the judicial decree that the actor and the vampire were, for legal purposes, one and the same.

Lugosi was lovingly resurrected 27 years ago in Tim Burton's *Ed Wood,* the eccentric biopic of the man often called Earth's worst director. The thought of giving him an Oscar undoubtedly scared the daylights out of the Academy, but Martin Landau, the man who went to bat for him in *Ed Wood,* won a best supporting actor award for his depiction of Lugosi. The film's most bizarrely poignant moment comes when Landau intones Lugosi's mad monologue from Wood's *Bride of the Monster* (1955): "Home? I haff no home! Hunted, despised. Liffing like an animal. The jungle is my home, but I vill show the world that I can be its master."

He was wide as a coffin, and his crystalline blue eyes contemplated a world that was curious, beastly, deranged, and even loathsome.

A sucker is born every minute, and the bloodsucker Béla Ferenc Dezső Blaskó was born in 1882 in what was then the Kingdom of Hungary (now Romania). His village of Lugos was 245 miles from—where else?—the castle of Vlad III (Vlad Dracula) in—where else?—Transylvania, a province Lugosi would later make infamous. The youngest of four children, he told his father, a banker, that he wanted to pursue a career in theater, but his old man didn't think acting was a bankable profession. So at the precocious age of 12, Bela dropped out of school and found work as, among other things, a miner and machinist. Adapting the name of his hometown as a stage name


Lugosi Béla
Lugosi Béla
Angelo
Budapest

for, he said, a more "aristocratic" flavor, he made his theatrical debut at 20. He found steady work with traveling theater companies, appearing in operas, operettas, and stage plays. In 1911, he cut his teeth as a leading man at Magyar Szinhaz, a Budapest repertory company, and two years later he caught a major break when the most prestigious performing arts venue in his homeland—the Budapest-based National Theatre of Hungary—cast him in no less than 34 shows. There he played mostly small Shakespearean roles, such as Rosencrantz in *Hamlet* and Sir Walter Herbert in *Richard III,* and appeared in some of Hungary's early silent films.

During World War I, Lugosi enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian army and rose to the rank of lieutenant. Wounded on the Russian front, he would later make the somewhat dubious claim that he had "escaped death on the battlefield by hiding in a mass grave under a pile of corpses." Once his service was completed, he returned to the National Theatre. A political activist—he joined the workers' revolution and campaigned for the Hungarian Communist Party—Lugosi led a mass demonstration of actors that called for the government to reorganize the country's film industry and limit profits of distributors who were getting rich while actors and other workers suffered. He helped launch the Free Organization of Theatrical Employees, which would expand into the world's first film actors guild, the National Trade Union of Actors. Already a charismatic figure with a magnetism even Dracula might envy, Lugosi served as the organization's general secretary. But the political upheaval that followed the fall of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic forced the prominent anti-fascist to flee his homeland, where, like the Count's victims, theatrical union sympathizers had a habit of being spirited away in the dead of night to be tortured and killed.

Lugosi hotfooted to Austria, then Weimar Germany, where he latched onto the burgeoning silent-film

THE NEW YORK MAGAZINE PROGRAM

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FIRE NOTICE: Look around NOW and choose the nearest Exit to your seat. In case of fire, walk (not run) to THAT Exit. Do not try to beat your neighbor to the street.
JOHN J. DORMAN, Fire Commissioner.

WEEK BEGINNING MONDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 21, 1927
Matinees Wednesday and Saturday

HORACE LIVERIGHT
Presents

"DRACULA"

The Vampire Play

Dramatized by
Hamilton Deane and John Balderston
From Bram Stoker's Famous Novel "Dracula".
Staged by IRA HARDS
Scenes by Joseph Physioc

CHARACTERS
(In Order of Their Appearance)

WELLS ..... NEDDA HARRIGAN
JONATHAN HARKER ..... TERRENCE NEILL
DR. SEWARD ..... HERBERT BUNSTON
ABRAHAM vanHELSING ..... EDWARD VANSLOAN
R. M. RENFIELD ..... BERNARD JUKES
BUTTERWORTH ..... JAMES JOLLEY
LUCY SEWARD ..... DOROTHY PETERSON
COUNT DRACULA ..... BELA LUGOSI

PROGRAM CONTINUED ON SECOND PAGE FOLLOWING

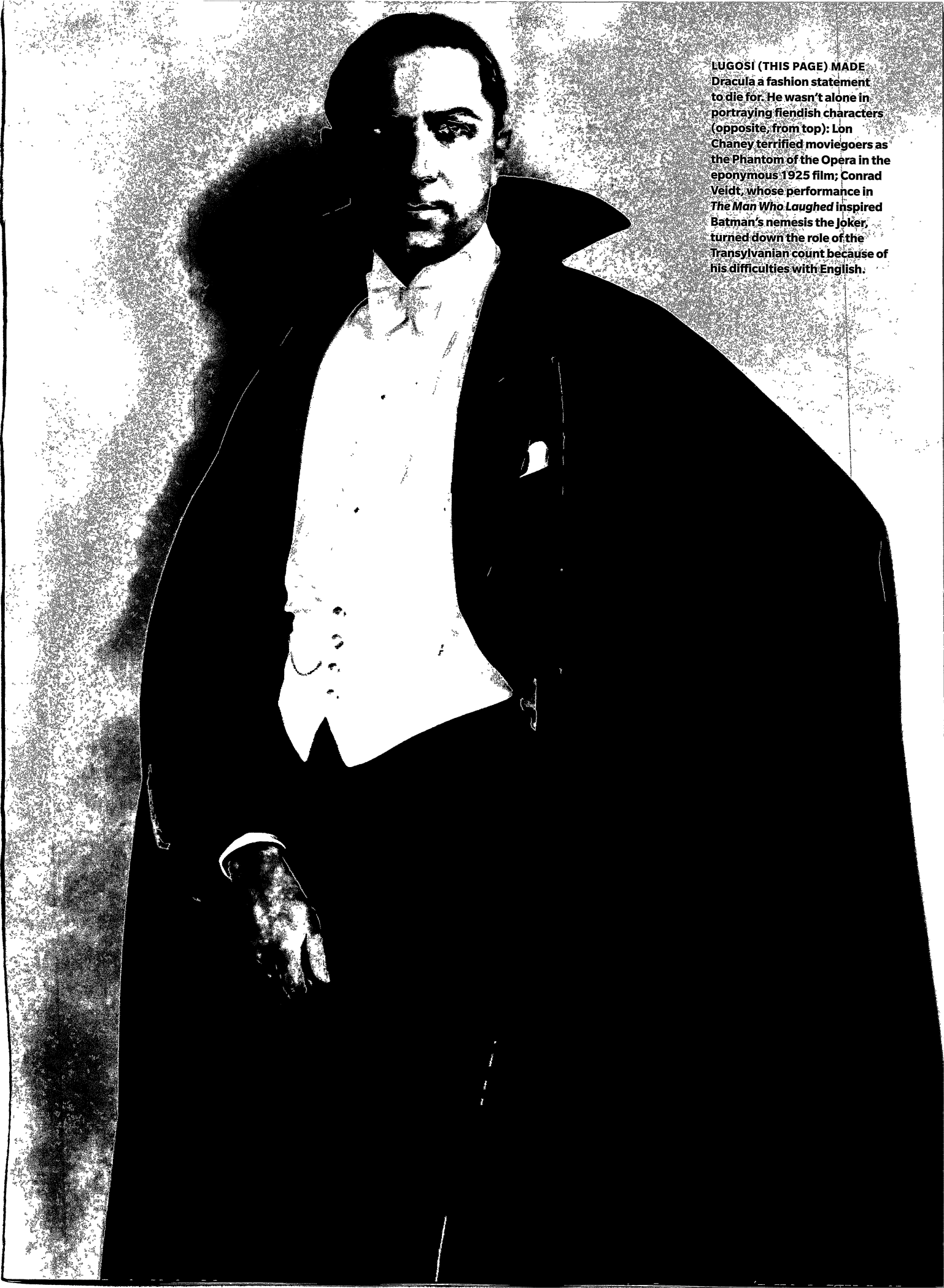
BELA LUGOSI PERFORMING IN Germany in 1920 (opposite). *Dracula* opened at Broadway's Fulton Theatre in October 1927. The play, by Hamilton Deane and John Balderston, was based on Stoker's tale. It ran for 261 performances. The New York *Daily News* referred to Lugosi as "shroudlike" and Dorothy Peterson—who portrayed Lucy Seward—as the "harassed heroine" in a show "drippy with gloom and mystery."

industry. His most notable credit was *Lederstrumpf,* a riff on a James Fenimore Cooper story, in which he played Mohican native Chingachgook, faithful companion to Hawkeye the Deerslayer. In 1920 he emigrated to America on a merchant ship. When he arrived in New Orleans, he spoke negligible English. Yet within a year he was producing Hungarian plays and carving out a slender living on Broadway playing exotics—the first of which was Fernando, a suave Latin lover, in *The Red Poppy* at the Greenwich Village Theater. Stubborn about learning a new language, he would instead memorize his lines from cue cards, sounding out the words phonetically. "For

Even though Lugosi's darkly handsome face was tinted a pale green for the theater, women fell under his spell.

20 years I was a straight actor, never a villain," Lugosi later recounted. "Then Universal says: 'Lugosi. Horror. Box office. Fine.' And I am horror."

He was, of course, being monstrously disingenuous. Well before the movie role, Lugosi had been synonymous with Dracula, since headlining as the count in a sentimentalized adaptation of Bram Stoker's 1897 thriller. The play had opened to packed houses in London in 1924. Sensing its potential, Horace Liveright, Ernest Hemingway's first American publisher, created a stateside version of the show. Lugosi was hired to play Dracula in the summer of 1927. The melodrama ran on Broadway for 261 performances, followed by a two-year national tour. Though Lugosi's darkly handsome face was tinted a pale green, women fell under his spell. "It was the embrace



LUGOSI (THIS PAGE) MADE Dracula a fashion statement to die for. He wasn't alone in portraying fiendish characters (opposite, from top): Lon Chaney terrified moviegoers as the Phantom of the Opera in the eponymous 1925 film; Conrad Veidt, whose performance in *The Man Who Laughed* inspired Batman's nemesis the Joker, turned down the role of the Transylvanian count because of his difficulties with English.

of Death that their subconscious was yearning for," he suggested. "Death, the final, triumphant lover."

In his toothsome study *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen,* Skal recounts an opening night on which Lugosi played the dual roles of the Count and his destroyer, Jonathan Harker. At one point, Harker prepares to drive a wooden stake through the heart of the vampire, which in that particular scene was played by a dummy. "He raised the hammer, swung it down... and missed. The rubber hammer bounced off the dummy. Lugosi gave his yell on cue as if nothing was amiss, and the audience and company just froze in silence. Finally [another actor] blurted out an unforgettable, exasperated ad lib:

"'Hit him again, Harker!'

"The audience went to pieces, stopping the show for a full two minutes."

Not all spectators were amused. During the play's London run, a uniformed nurse was on hand to dispense smelling salts to the faint. At one performance, 39 theatergoers availed themselves of the service.

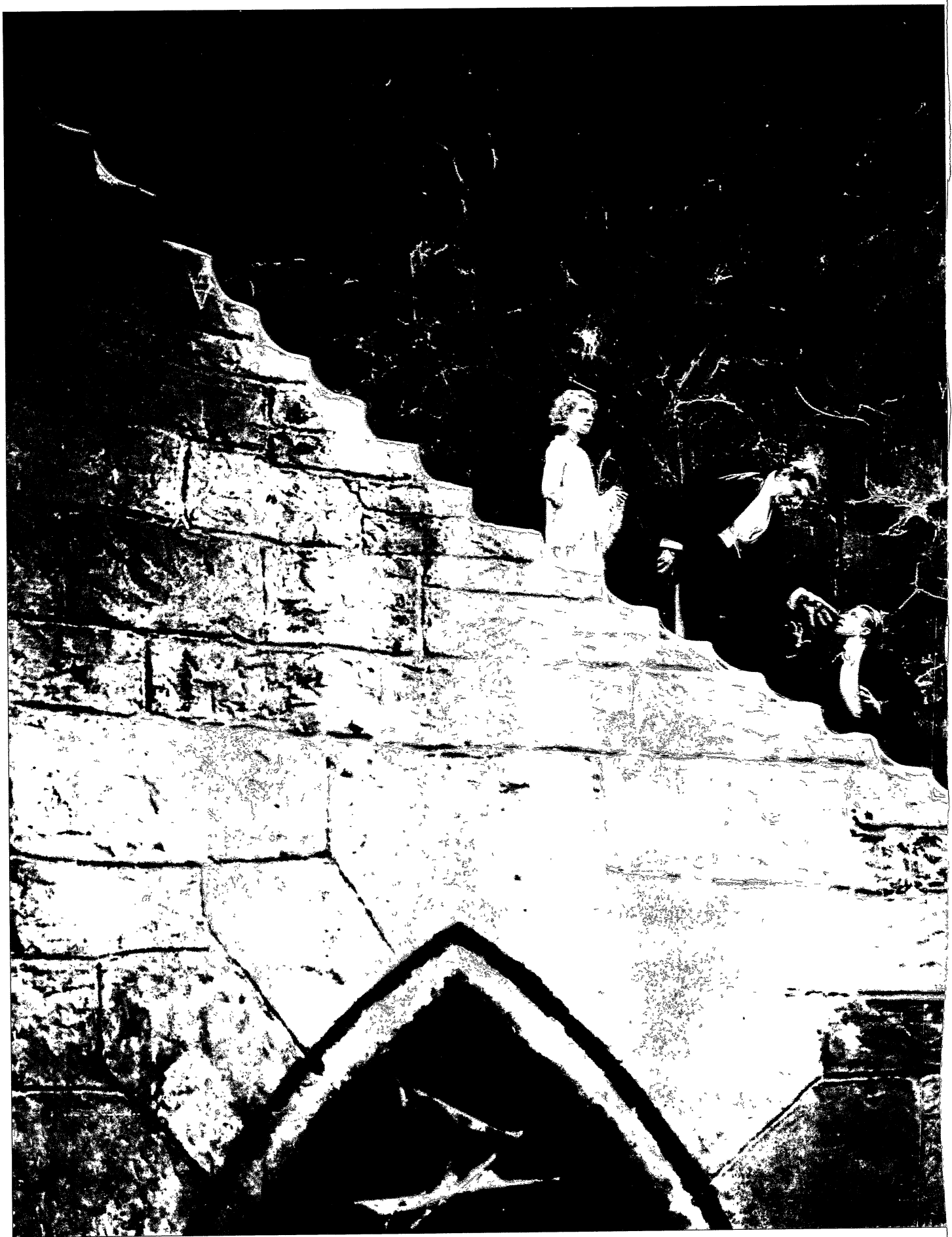
Despite the show's popularity, Hollywood was hesitant to bring Dracula to the screen. "In the silent days, in America, at least, you could have all kinds of monsters and ghosts and eerie happenings, but they all had to be explained away at the end," said Skal. "Unlike European tradition, in which golems and vampires and doppelgängers were just par for the course, America had a very different attitude, and it was difficult to convince the studios to do this."

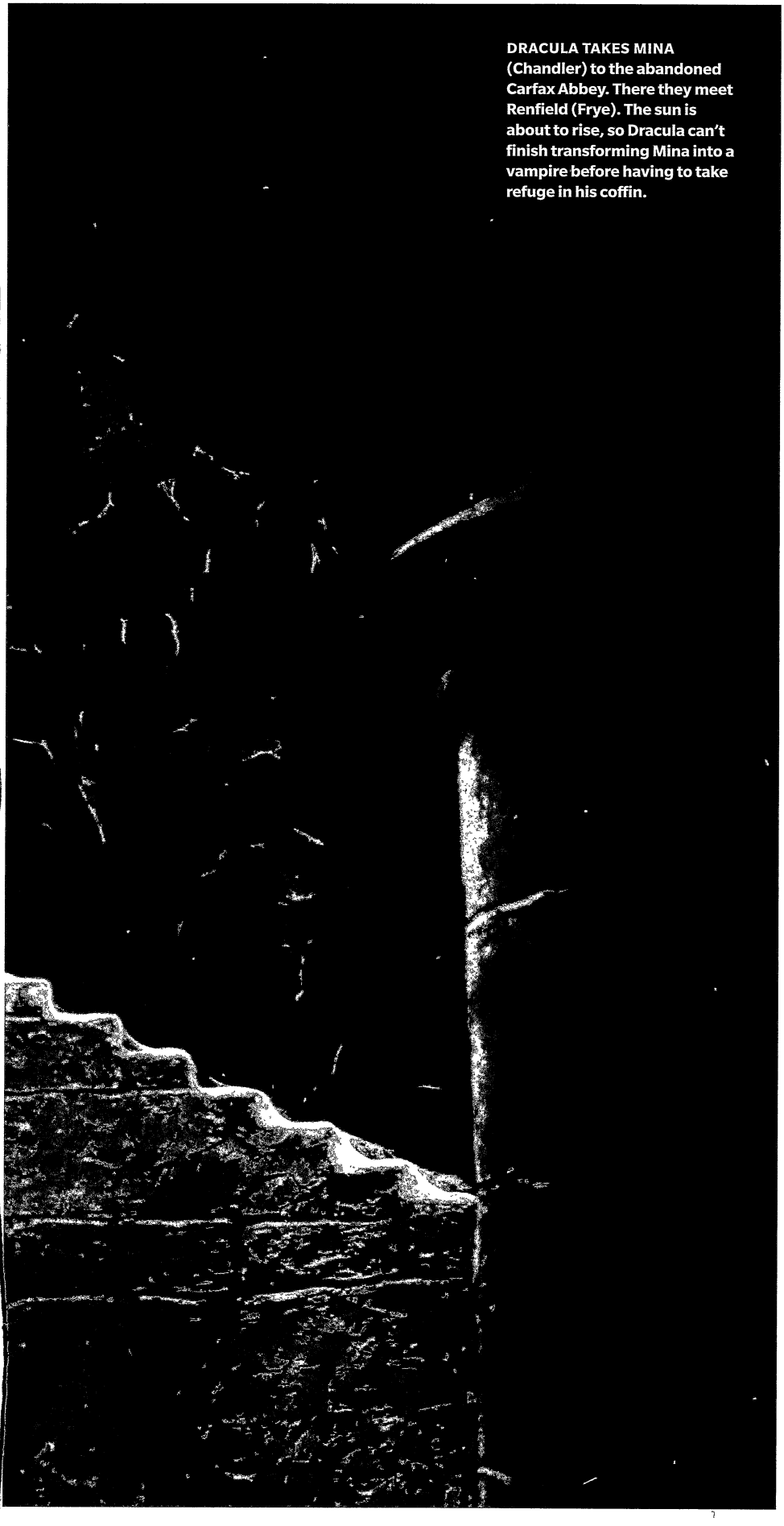
In 1930, Universal Pictures, on the brink of bankruptcy, paid $40,000 for the American rights to the property. The studio's first choice for the screen Dracula was reportedly Conrad Veidt, but the German actor, best remembered as the homicidal somnambulist in the chilling *Cabinet of Caligari* (1920), couldn't get a handle on English and opted to return to Germany. Lon Chaney was the next choice, but the Man of a Thousand Faces died of

LUGOSI AS DRACULA, HELEN Chandler as Mina, and Dwight Frye as R.M. Renfield on Universal Pictures' set for *Dracula* (left). When Renfield arrives in Transylvania and tells the locals he's heading to Dracula's castle, a woman crosses herself. He ignores the townsfolks' dire warnings and boards a coach for the count's, unaware that Dracula is the driver (above).

throat cancer before production began. While the studio considered at least eight actors for the role—including the more established Paul Muni and Chester Morris—Lugosi campaigned openly. Perhaps too openly: He had to settle for a relatively anemic $3,500 for the seven-week shoot, the only money he ever received for the film. David Manners, who played Jonathan Harker, made four times as much.

Released on Valentine's Day 1931 and advertised as "The Strangest Love Story of All," *Dracula* was Lugosi's 14th American movie and the world's first sound horror film. Soon after the opening credits roll to the strains of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake,* a stagecoach rolls through the night mists of Transylvania's Carpathian Mountains. Inside the coach, a naive solicitor named R. M. Renfield (Dwight Frye) is traveling to Castle Dracula to arrange the lease of an abbey in London. Unbeknownst to Renfield, Dracula is one of the undead. Waving off the warnings of the locals, the solicitor boards a coach to the castle, with the count himself disguised as the driver. When Renfield sticks his head out the window to ask the driver to slow down, he sees that the carriage is driverless; the horses are being led by a bat.





DRACULA TAKES MINA (Chandler) to the abandoned Carfax Abbey. There they meet Renfield (Frye). The sun is about to rise, so Dracula can't finish transforming Mina into a vampire before having to take refuge in his coffin.

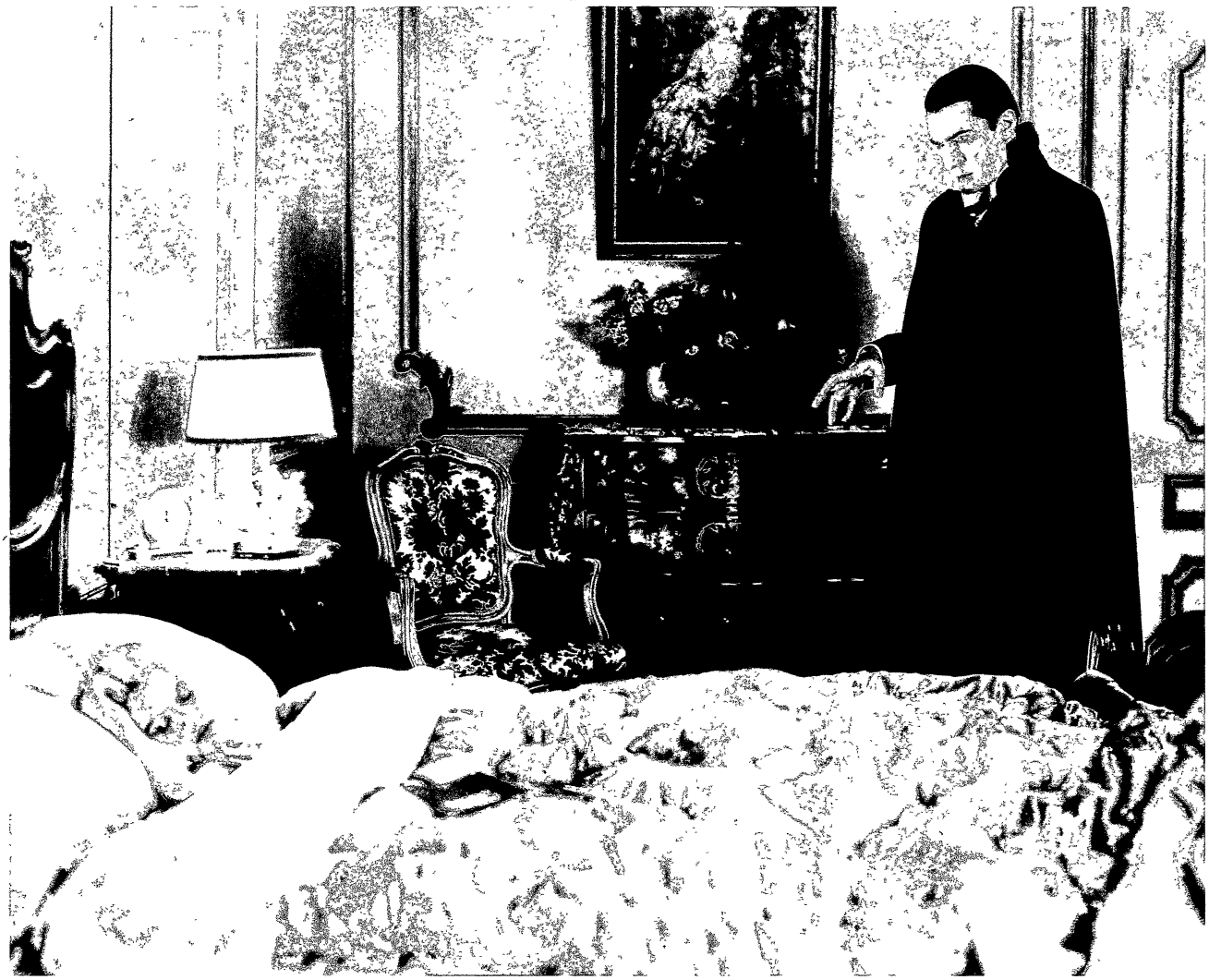
At the castle—a gloomy ruin infested with rats, spiders, and armadillos—the eerily hypnotic count offers his guest liquid refreshment, adding archly: "I never drink... wine." Renfield is drugged by Dracula, who turns him into one of his thralls. Soon after, aboard the schooner Vesta, the vampire hides in a coffin during the day and feasts on the crew at night. By the time they arrive in London, Renfield is a raving loony and Dracula has murdered everyone else on board.

After those sublime first 20 minutes, the final reels of *Dracula* bog down in a turgid, drawing-room rehash of the Broadway hit. The bug-eating Renfield is committed to a madhouse,

At the castle—a gloomy ruin infested with rats, spiders, and armadillos—the count offers his guest liquid refreshment, adding: "I never drink... wine. "

and Dracula wreaks havoc, sucking the blood of young women and turning them into princesses of darkness. When the count sets his sights on Mina Seward (Helen Chandler), the daughter of a prominent doctor, vampire slayer Van Helsing (Edward Van Sloan) is enlisted to put a stop to the endless bloodlust. Though Van Helsing quickly realizes that the count is a vampire—Dracula has no reflection in a mirrored cigarette case—the stately aristocrat attempts to transform Mina into a vampire as well, conveying her to the abbey. Van Helsing follows him there and, protected by a crucifix, impales him with a wooden stake through the heart.

An epilogue in the original theatrical release had Van Helsing cautioning moviegoers that vampires do indeed



exist. Fearing that religious groups might be offended, and also to comply with Hollywood's Production Code, the studio later cut the ending. The epilogue, in fact, was one of many elements that drew complaints. Censors demanded that Dracula's brides and Renfield's rat soliloquy be cut from the film. The Massachusetts Board of Censors wanted two brief shots—one of a skeleton in a casket; the other, a beetle emerging from a tiny coffin—excised "to enable viewing on Sunday." Dracula horrified National PTA chair Marjorie Ross Davis, who told the Motion Picture Producers and Directors Association that she had seen the first 15 minutes and "felt I could stand no more... It should be withdrawn from public showing as children, [the] weak-minded and all classes attend motion pictures indiscriminately."

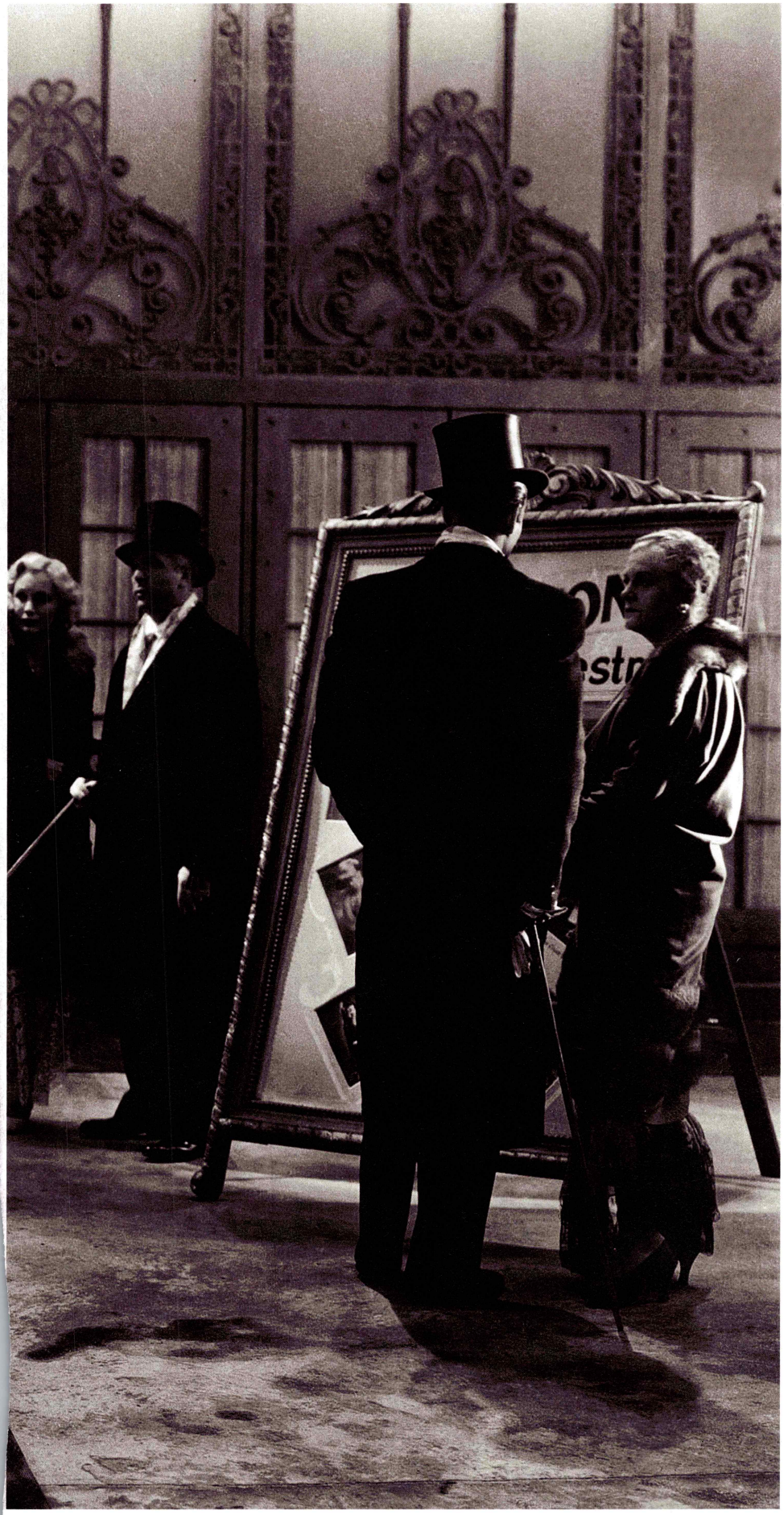
An interesting footnote: Universal simultaneously made a Spanish-language version of *Dracula,* filmed at night using the same set pieces as the English-speaking classic, with a different cast and crew. Skal reports that the actors in the atmospheric, if not altogether experimental Spanish film were paid less, worked harder, and were led by wiser artistic hands. Many critics feel that the Spanish *Dracula* is the better of the two films, and that its lead, Carlos Villarias, had a more sympathetic take on the character.

The American version opened to mixed reviews, and Lugosi's performance would go on to draw both praise and criticism. "I thought Lugosi was very stilted in his delivery," said the late English actor Christopher Lee, who from 1958 to 1973 appeared as Count Dracula in seven Hammer Horror films. "He looked uncomfortable. He relied on his face and eyes, but you must have bodily movement, and there was a strange rigidity about him... Because of his problems with English, the emphasis placed on certain words and his timing, it's a performance that's all too easy to parody. But he did have a mesmeric quality, no question."

Dracula earned Universal $700,000 in its first year, twice its production cost. It was the studio's top-grossing film of 1931, and it single-handedly resurrected the studio. Overnight, Lugosi became a matinee idol. His fan mail equaled, if not surpassed, that of the other A-list stars of the day. (Ninety-seven percent of that mail, Lugosi claimed, came from women.) But the film's runaway success drove a stake through the heart of Lugosi's acting career—from then on he was hopelessly typecast as a heavy. "I played every type of role in Budapest," he lamented. "But here they only think I can scare children. It is

WHEN DRACULA ARRIVES IN London, he meets Lucy Weston (Frances Dade) and starts changing her into a vampire (opposite). He harbors similar aims for her best friend, Mina (Chandler), seen here in a still from the Universal Studios film.

AS A VAMPIRE ABOUT TOWN, the dashingly dressed Dracula kills a flower girl selling violets and then heads to the concert hall where the London Symphony is performing. As the orchestra plays the life-affirming overture to Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg,* Dracula goes to meet a few of his future victims.



very discouraging."

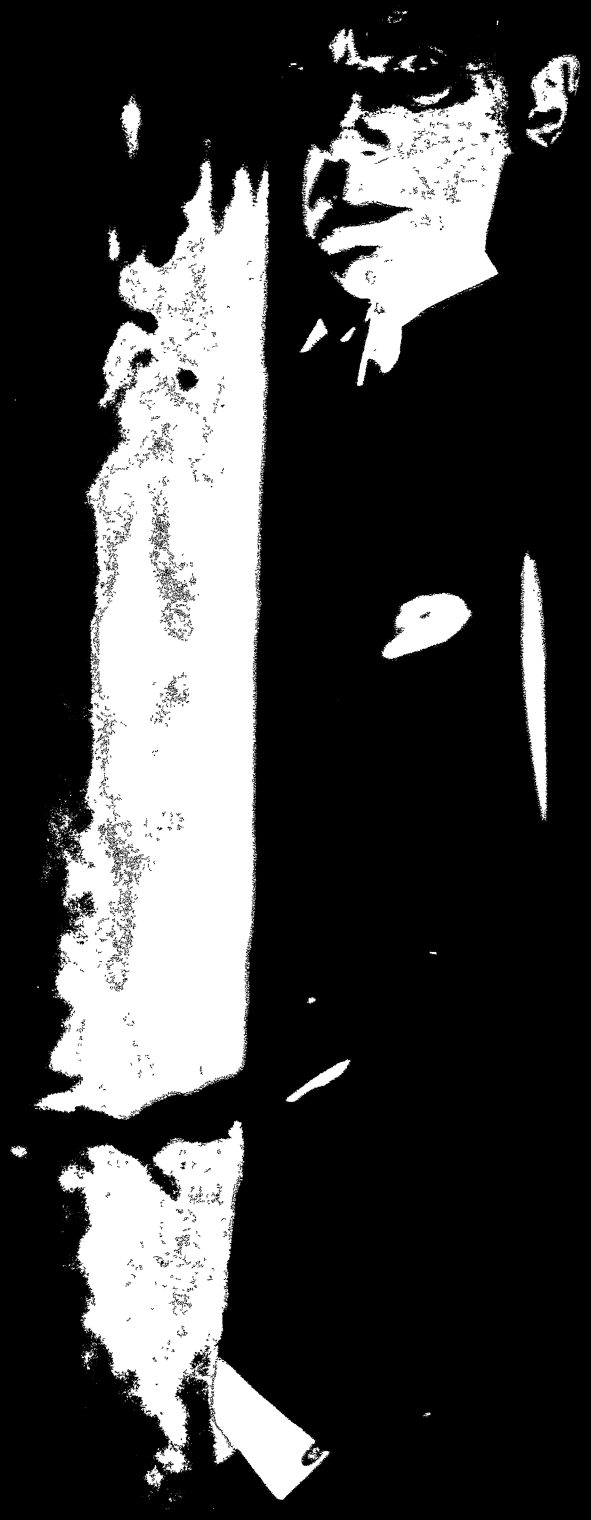
Dracula proved to be such a box office smash that Universal, chasing more monster magic, greenlit an adaptation of *Frankenstein,* Mary Shelley's 1818 novel. Initially offered the meaty part of scientist Henry Frankenstein, Lugosi was demoted to the role of monster following a change of directors and script. He objected to the heavy makeup (he had declined to be filmed with sharp fangs in *Dracula*) and to the grunting dialogue, saying, "I'm an actor, not a scarecrow." Afraid that another monster role would sully his romantic image, the vain Lugosi bowed out of the film altogether, protesting that the character was better suited for some

Lugosi was cast as the monster in Frankenstein *but bowed out, saying, "I'm an actor, not a scarecrow."*

"halfwit extra" than a serious actor. Meanwhile, director James Whale spotted an obscure bit player eating lunch in the studio commissary and started making sketches of his face. The extra, British contract player William Henry Pratt, had already made 80 films—and went by the stage name Boris Karloff.

The fusion of Karloff with Jack P. Pierce's makeup made him what film historian J. Hoberman has called "the eternal visage of Hollywood horror." *Frankenstein* was an even bigger hit than *Dracula,* grossing $12 million worldwide, and Karloff's success propelled him to even greater popularity than Lugosi, a situation that forever haunted the Hungarian. According to several contemporaneous accounts, Lugosi and Karloff remained at each other's throats for much of the

WHILE DRACULA POSSESSES otherworldly powers, he can be defeated, for he, too, fears things that go bump in the night. The count fails to hypnotize Van Helsing (opposite), admitting that the professor's "will is strong." Van Helsing then reaches into his jacket pocket for something "more effective than wolfsbane," pulling out a small crucifix and causing the count to flee.



rest of their lives. Lugosi would refer to Karloff as "my rival"; Karloff called Lugosi "poor Bela." Still, in 1933, the Titans of Terror joined forces to help establish the Screen Actors Guild in an effort to eliminate what was described as exploitation of Hollywood actors bound to the major studios by oppressive multiyear contracts, unable to pick their own movies, their own career paths, or, in a few cases, their own relationships. Karloff was SAG member No. 9; Lugosi, No. 28.

If Lugosi and Karloff were in fact enemies, they were the best of enemies. In 1934, they teamed up in their first of eight onscreen pairings for Edgar Ulmer's *The Black Cat,* a film loosely based on a story by Edgar Allan Poe and noted for its horrifying bit of sadism: A victim is skinned alive on a ceremonial altar. Ads boasted that it was "the monster of *Frankenstein* plus the monster of *Dracula,* plus the 'monstrousness' of Edgar Allan Poe, all combined by the master makers of screen mysteries to give you the absolute apex in super-shivery." Karloff commanded a fee of $7,500 for the four-week shoot. Lugosi accepted $3,000, a sad sign of his diminishing marquee value. Lugosi had just finished one of the many bare-bones stage *Dracula* tours he would be forced to take on the road over the decades.

In *The Black Cat,* Lugosi plays an ailurophobic (afraid of cats) psychiatrist, Dr. Vitus Werdegast, who returns to his native country after a 15-year confinement in a military prison to seek vengeance against his former commander, the lisping architect Hjalmar Poelzig (Karloff). According to Werdegast, Poelzig not only abandoned his troops but also bumped off the doctor's wife and daughter. The cosmic death struggle between Werdegast and Poelzig reaches its diabolical climax in a chess game for the fate of the heroine. Her husband tries to call a cab to escape Karloff's lair, only to pick up the receiver and discover that the line has been cut. "Do you hear that, Vitus?" asks Karloff. "Even the phone is dead."

Together, Lugosi and Karloff were too frightening for their own good. Their 1935 collaboration, *The Raven,* provoked a protest from British parents. Soon the bloodless British Board of Film censors banned the import and screening of all horror pictures. Hollywood studios, which did big business in England, briefly stopped making the movies. In the biography *The Life and Films of Bela "Dracula"*

CARL LAEMMLE presents
DRACULA
with
BELA LUGOSI
DAVID MANNERS
HELEN CHANDLER
DWIGHT FRYE and
EDWARD VAN SLOAN
A TOD BROWNING Production
FROM THE FAMOUS NOVEL AND PLAY BY BRAM STOKER
PRODUCED BY CARL LAEMMLE Jr.
UNIVERSAL PICTURES
UNIVERSAL PICTURE
The story of the strangest Passion the world has ever known!

A POSTER FOR UNIVERSAL Pictures' 1931 *Dracula* (left), a film *Time* magazine called "an exciting melodrama... a cut above the ordinary trapdoor-and-winding-sheet type of mystery film." The film showed at Jersey City's Stanley Theatre (above), at the time one of the nation's largest movie palaces.

Lugosi, Arthur Lennig notes: "Neither Lugosi nor Karloff could have known that by the end of 1935 the high points of their careers had passed and that the demand for them as horror stars would slacken... In short, the Golden Age of Horror was over."

Realistically, Lugosi had as much chance of breaking out of creature features as he did of being cast as Rhett Butler—although he did appear as a commissar in the 1939 best picture nominee *Ninotchka* with Greta Garbo. His most splendid screen performance was arguably in another film of that year, *Son of Frankenstein.* Signed to play a police inspector, he improvised a character on the set—the demented, snaggletoothed Ygor, a shepherd turned grave robber who survived a lynching, albeit with a broken neck. About as far from the gentlemanly Dracula as an actor can get, the remarkable Ygor was the last role to showcase Lugosi's versatility.

His popularity continued to wane in the 1940s as audience tastes changed and the Atomic Age unfolded. With few job offers, Lugosi lost his home and his fortune. His only child, Bela Jr.—who was born in 1938 to Lillian Arch, the fourth of Lugosi's five wives—became an L.A. lawyer whose clients once included heirs of the Three Stooges. He remembers his father as a "disciplinarian, but he never had to yell. All he had to do was give me that look. It would scare the hell out of me." Junior watched his dad's horror films as a child, but he was never unnerved by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60

BELA LUGOSI AND BORIS Karloff teamed up for numerous films, including 1935's *The Raven*, in which Lugosi (right) played Dr. Richard Vollin. Karloff was the fugitive killer Edmond Bateman, who tells Vollin, "I want you should change my face" to disguise his looks. But the villainous surgeon instead turns Bateman into a hideous creature as a way to enslave him.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 57

him: "How could you be scared of a guy you saw regularly in his underwear?"

The end of Lugosi's life played out like one of Ed Wood's screwier scripts. Virtually penniless, he was broken in health, with a long history of alcoholism and drug addiction. He got hooked on morphine in 1935 as a balm for sciatica while shooting *The Mark of the Vampire.* Though the pain in his legs eventually subsided, he left the hospital with what addicts of the era called "a monkey on his back." In 1938, he journeyed to England to purchase a pound of methadone, which was being used there to treat opioid dependence. For years afterward, the actor self-medicated in the privacy of his Hollywood home. "It didn't work," he said. "I kept getting sick."

To feed his monkey, he was reduced to acting in a string of schlock horror cheapies: *Old Mother Riley Meets the Vampire, Bela Lugosi Meets a Brooklyn Gorilla,* and Ed Wood's *Glen or Glenda* (called *I Changed My Sex* in the United States). But biographer Lennig found hidden gems even in Lugosi's worst stinkers: "If Lugosi chews the scenery at times, he chews with grandiose vigor, and often that chewing provides our only nourishment. This much can be said: He is never dull." And later: "Lugosi may appear as an unmitigated ham, but no one, I submit, has ever succeeded in delivering absurd lines with such dramatic power and, indeed, dignity."

Though the pain in his legs subsided, Lugosi left the hospital with what addicts of the era called "a monkey on his back."

In the end, Lugosi played Count Dracula in only two films, reprising the role in the embarrassing self-parody *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948). For the record, he had also made a cameo as an 8" x 10" glossy in 1936's *Dracula's Daughter*—an especially curious appearance, given that vampires can't be photographed.

Using his addiction as a desperate ploy for both attention and publicity—the press had a field day with the "dope fiend" angle—Lugosi committed himself, in 1955 at the age of 72, to a state hospital. When he checked in, he weighed only 125 pounds. "He was really shaken by the behavior of the

LUGOSI SCULPTING A BUST OF himself (opposite). At home with his fourth wife, Lillian, and their only child, Bela, in the late 1930s (above). The Lugosis in London in 1951 (right), where he performed in a revival of *Dracula*. Lillian wore a brooch in the shape of a bat on her hat.

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BUD ABBOTT & LOU COSTELLO
meet
FRANKENSTEIN

A HORROR FILM THAT WILL STIFFEN YOU WITH LAUGHTER!
JACK BRODER PRODUCTIONS presents
BELA LUGOSI meets a BROOKLYN GORILLA
DUKE MITCHELL · SAMMY PETRILLO
Introducing
with
CHARLITA · MURIEL LANDERS AND RAMONA THE CHIMP
Associate Producer HERMAN COHEN · Produced by MAURICE DUKE Directed by WILLIAM BEAUDINE · Screenplay by TIM RYAN

other patients," Wood recalled. "He said they tried to kiss him, beat him, and generally humiliate him. All the time we visited, he kept pleading with me to get him released." Lugosi's spirits were lifted by letters from an anonymous fan whose dream was to become Dracula's bride. Lugosi remained in rehab for 15 weeks, and when he was finally sprung in August of 1955, he met Hope Lininger, his secret admirer. Shortly thereafter, she became his fifth wife.

In his final year on earth, Lugosi would reportedly lie awake at night confused and afraid that Karloff was lying in wait for him. He died in bed on August 16, 1956, while reading a script titled *Final Curtain.* Ravaged by his struggle with narcotics, Lugosi was completely forgotten by the town that forgets. "He was the worst advertisement for rehabilitation," cracked stand-up comic Lenny Bruce. "He was a dope fiend for 20 years, he cleaned up and dropped dead."

At the request of Lugosi's family, his corpse was laid out for viewing in full Dracula regalia: medallion, tux, and sepulchral cape and cowl. "Bela knew great sadness in his life," said Karloff, "and the suffering he endured would have crushed the spirit of a lesser man. Before he died, he conquered his problem.

"We actors are a funny lot," he continued. "We want to be remembered for our performances, and not for our private sorrows. I know dear Bela would want to be remembered, not as a sad old man, but as Count Dracula. He was the greatest of all Draculas. Let us remember him for his greatness, and not his sadness."

Of course, Lugosiphiles will tell you the master is just going through a phase. "You fools!" he warned us. "You think with your vafers, your volfsbane, you think you can destroy me, me, the king of my kind ? You shall see!" ●

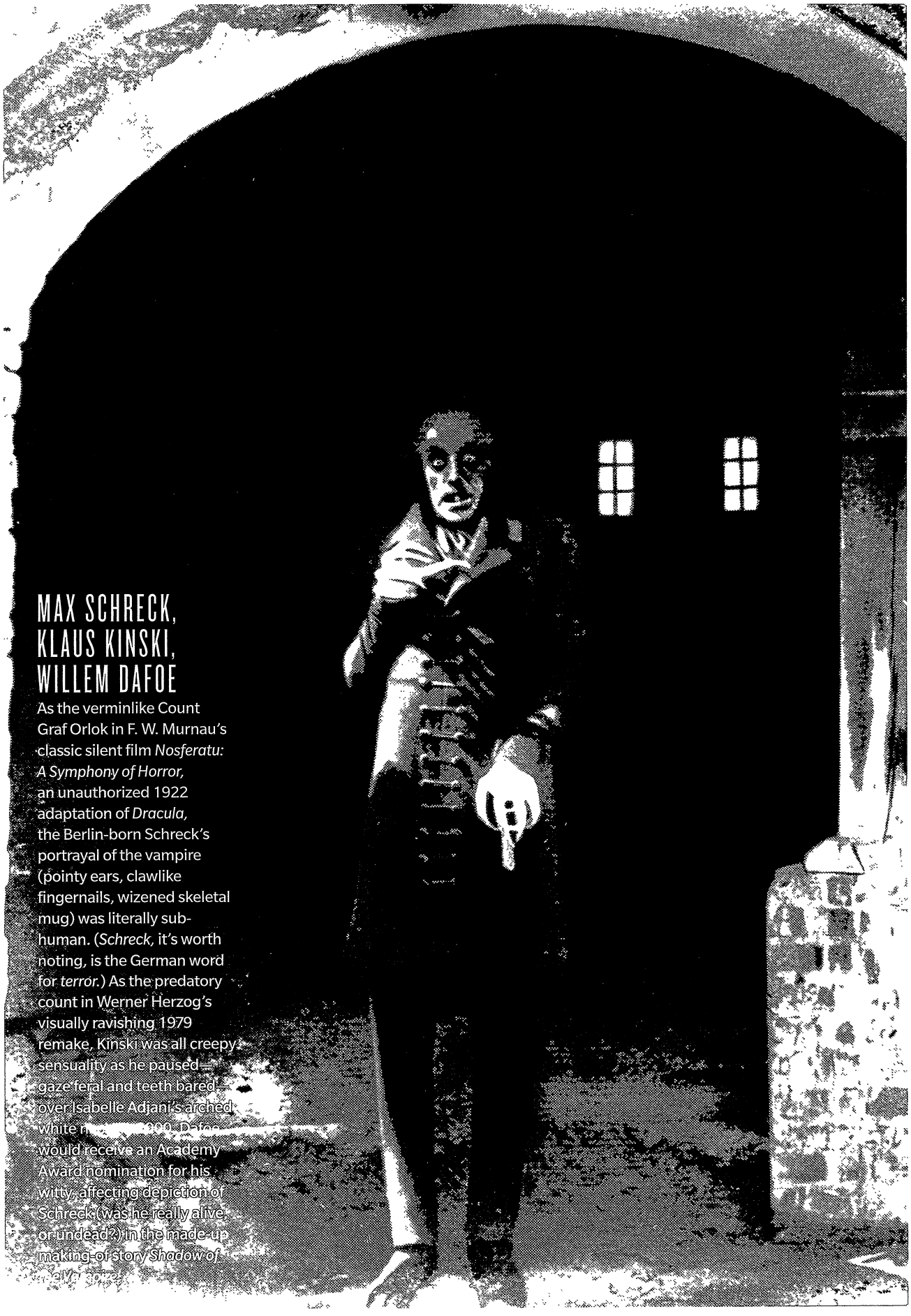
THE *DRACULA* STAR FOUND himself typecast as his most famous character and was forced to appear in a slew of low-budget movies, such as 1948's *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein* (left, with Lou Costello) and 1952's *Bela Lugosi Meets a Brooklyn Gorilla* and *Mother Riley Meets the Vampire* (with Arthur Lucan in drag). Lugosi is buried in Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City, California (below).

Celluloid Sensations

No one has done more for vampire lore than Bram Stoker and Bela Lugosi. Were there a Vampire Cave of Fame, they'd be the charter members. Many others, though, would also deserve a spot for their memorable potrayals of the vampiric. Others might be better off forgotten.

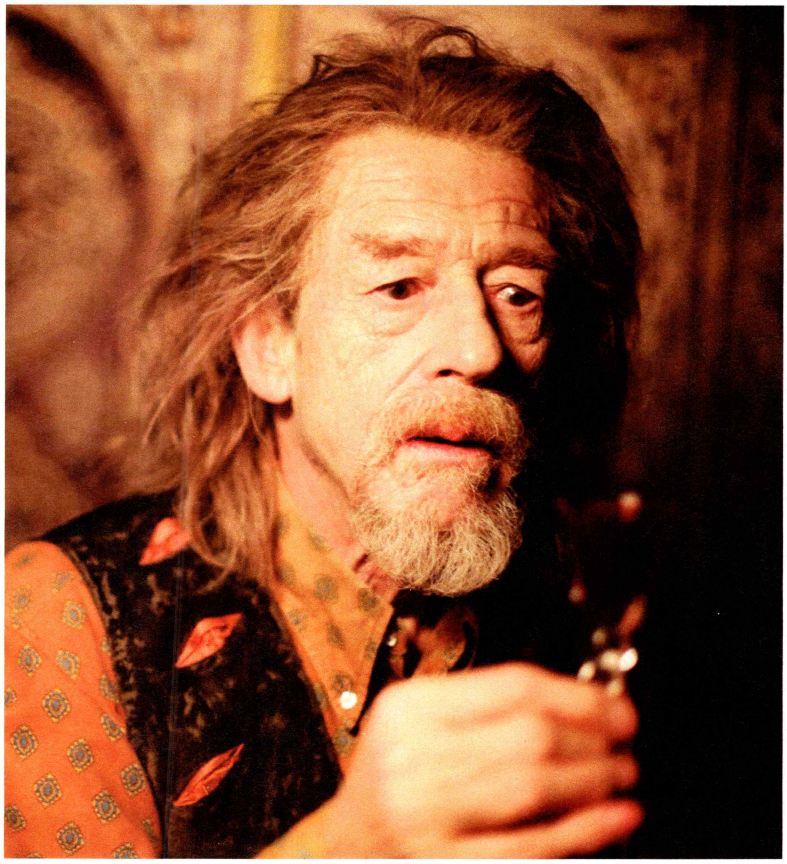
CHRISTOPHER LEE

When Lee wrote his autobiography in 1977, he called it *Tall, Dark and Gruesome*. The angular, athletic British movie actor appeared as the Transylvanian count in at least 10 outings, most of them produced by Hammer Films and all of them in red contact lenses. His fanged breakthrough came at age 36 in the title role of Terence Fisher's *Horror of Dracula*, the 1958 flick that first pitted Lee against Peter Cushing as his nemesis, Doctor Van Helsing. Lee's Dracula reveals himself to be a crisply charming blue blood who's far too natty to have come out of anyone's unconscious.



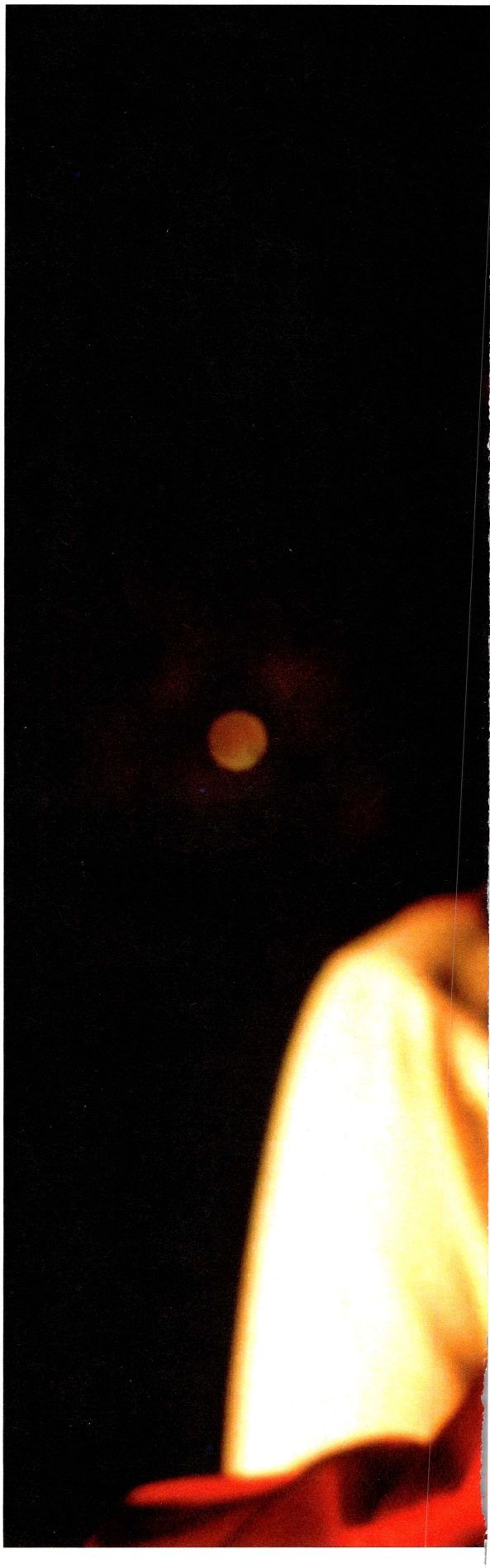
MAX SCHRECK, KLAUS KINSKI, WILLEM DAFOE

As the verminlike Count Graf Orlok in F. W. Murnau's classic silent film *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror,* an unauthorized 1922 adaptation of *Dracula,* the Berlin-born Schreck's portrayal of the vampire (pointy ears, clawlike fingernails, wizened skeletal mug) was literally sub-human. (*Schreck,* it's worth noting, is the German word for *terror.*) As the predatory count in Werner Herzog's visually ravishing 1979 remake, Kinski was all creepy sensuality as he paused—gaze feral and teeth bared—over Isabelle Adjani's arched white n[illegible]000. Dafoe would receive an Academy Award nomination for his witty, affecting depiction of Schreck (was he really alive or undead?) in the made-up making-of story *Shadow of [illegible]*



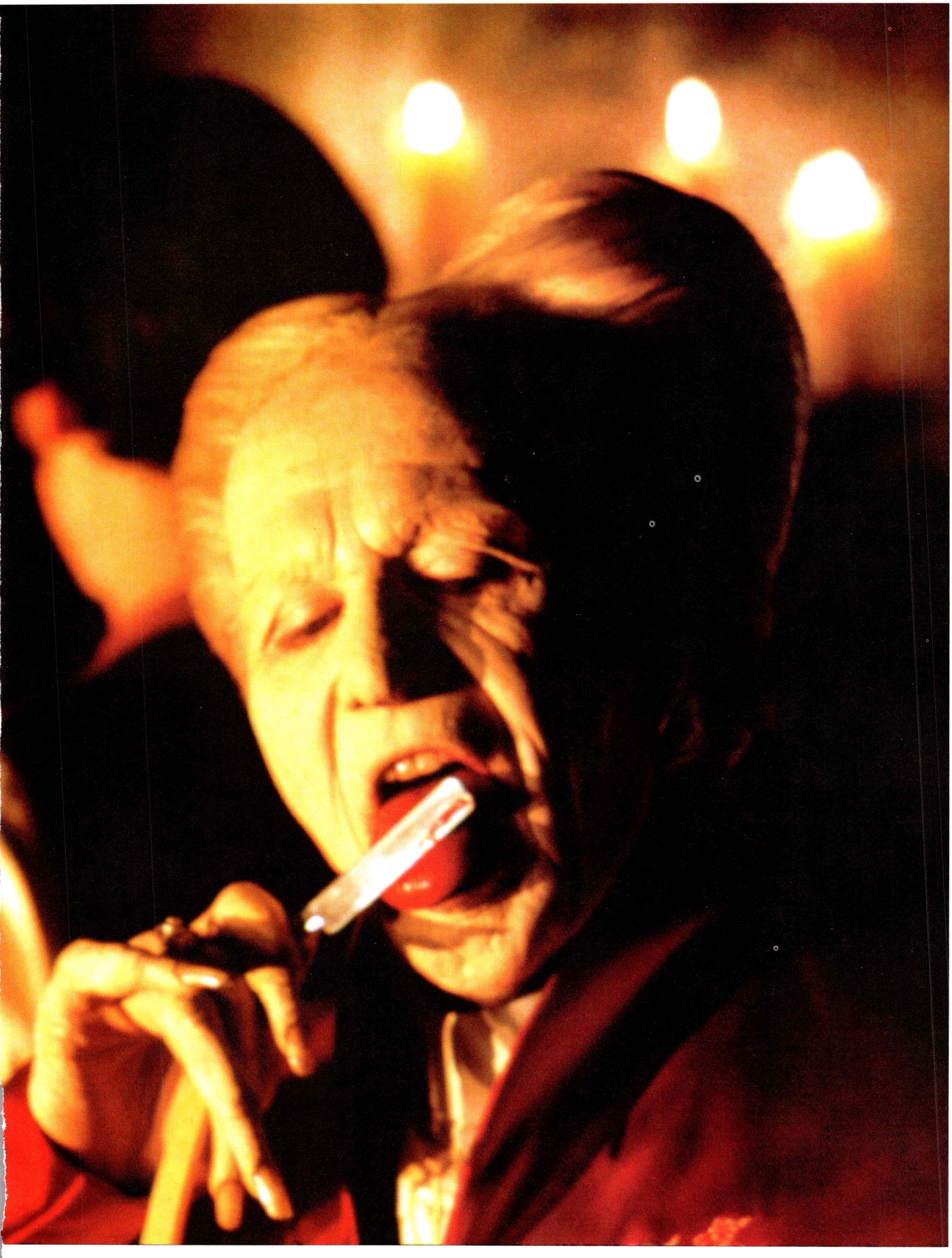
JOHN HURT

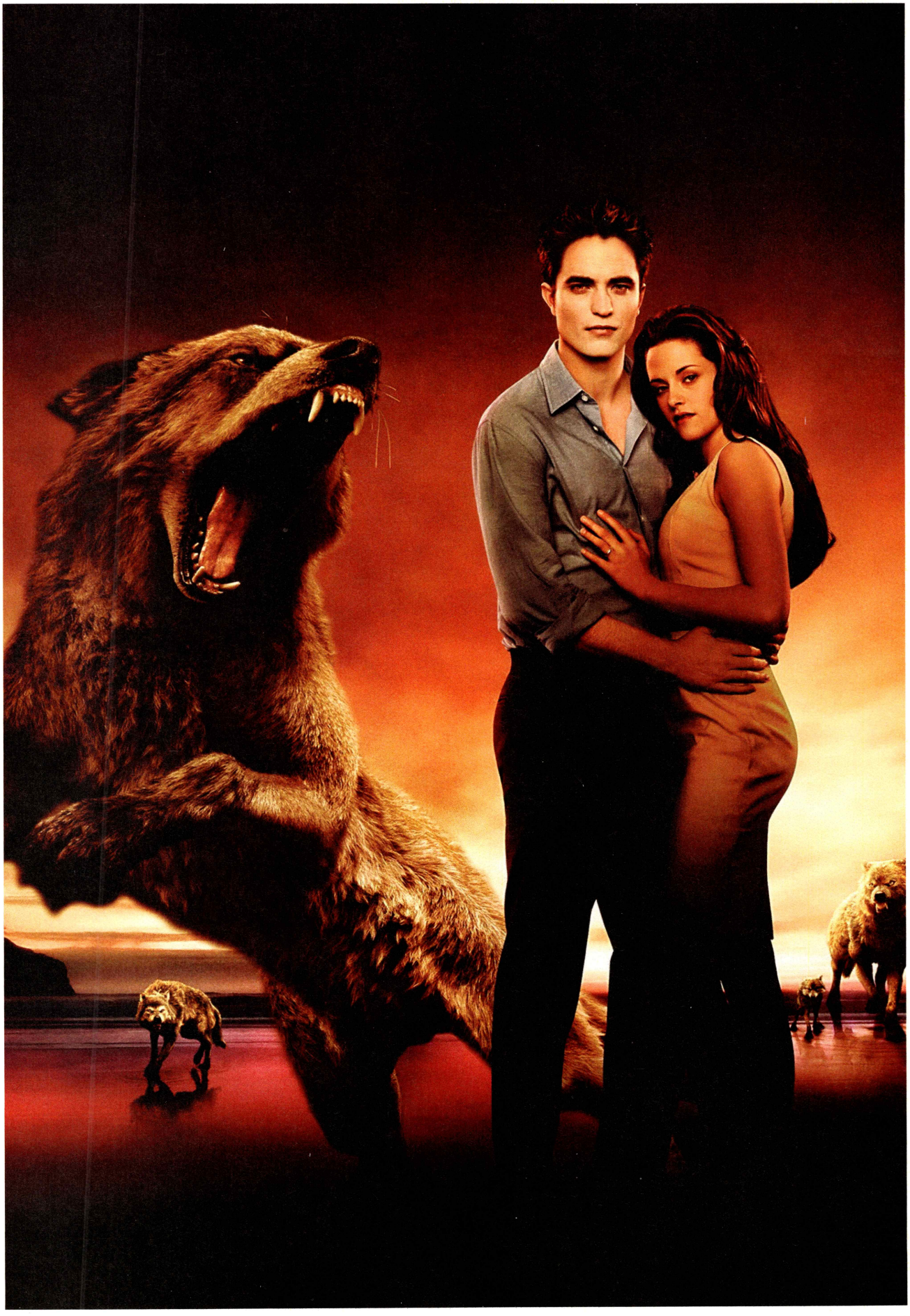
The gloriously grizzled British actor stole Jim Jarmusch's slow-burn vampire meditation *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013) as undead playwright Christopher "Kit" Marlowe, who grumbles about ghostwriting *Hamlet* and—five centuries after the fact—still regrets not receiving proper credit for Shakespeare's plays.

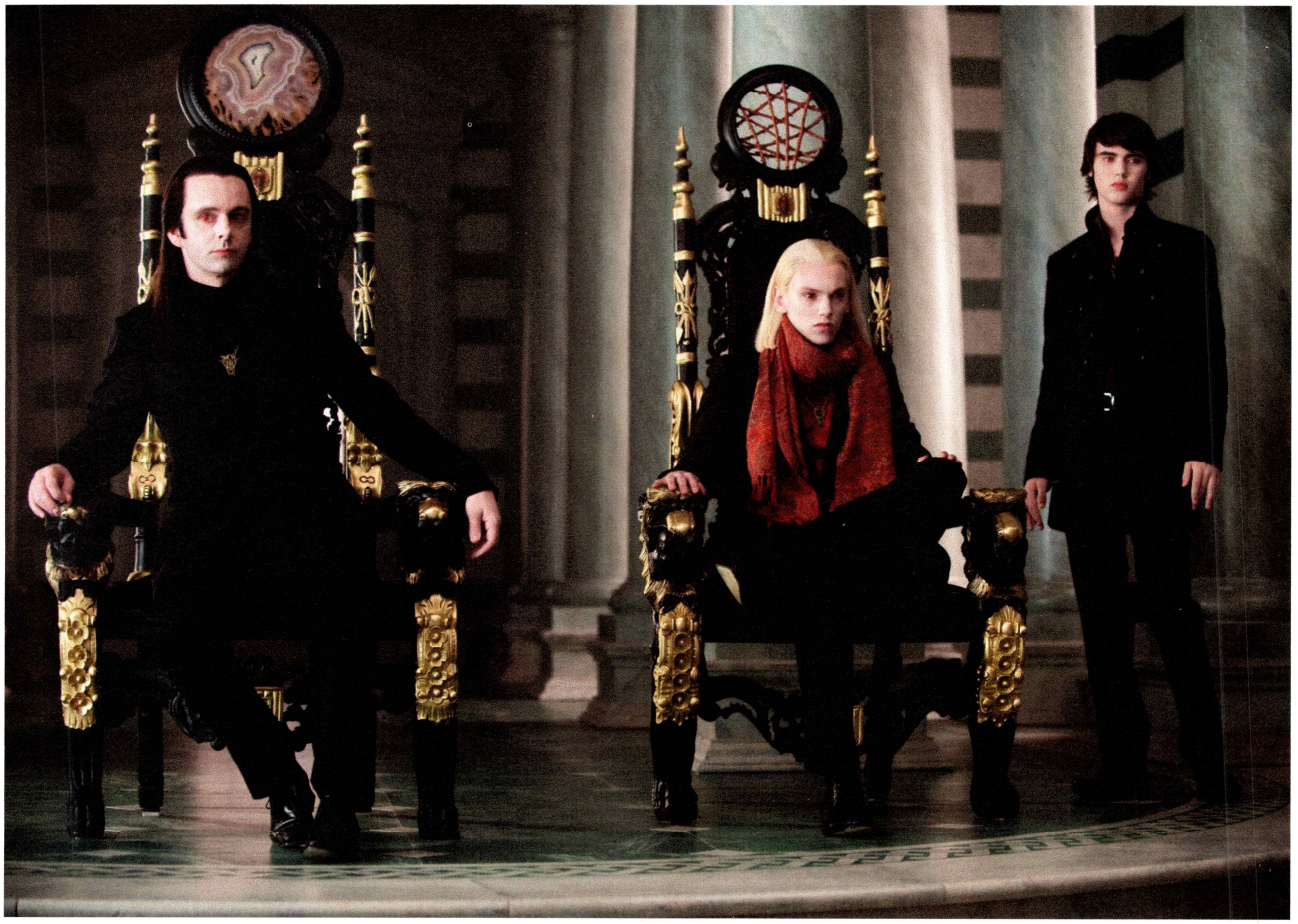


GARY OLDMAN

Bram Stoker's Dracula was a 1992 horror film directed and produced by Francis Ford Coppola. Oldman interpreted the title character as a creature of transformations. The actor, wrote critic Michael Wood, "is not only a wolf, a man-beast, a mist, a Renaissance warrior and an aged queen, he is a genuinely terrifying, giant-sized gargoyle and a column of rats."

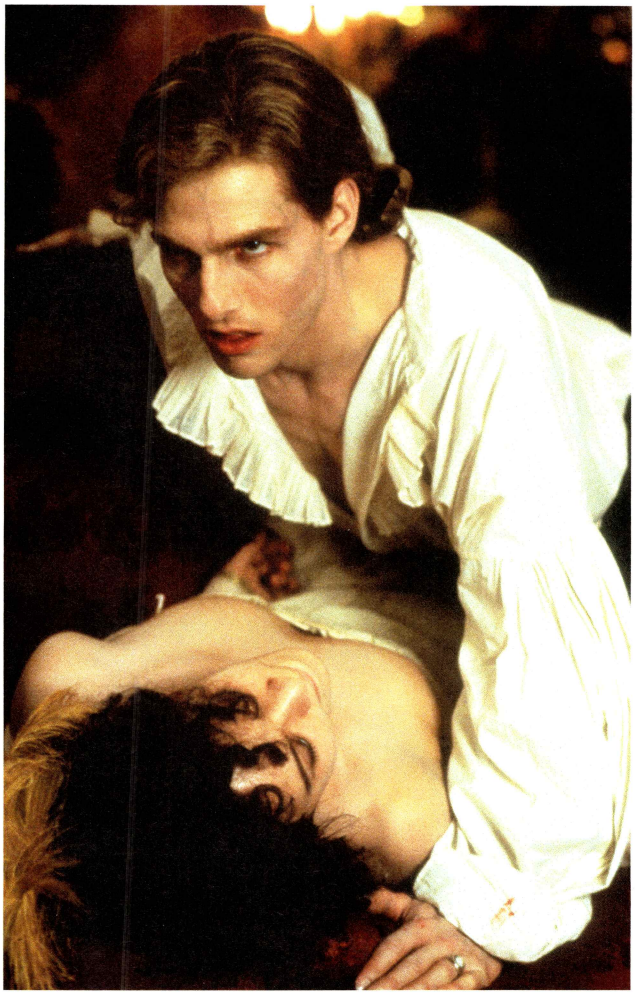


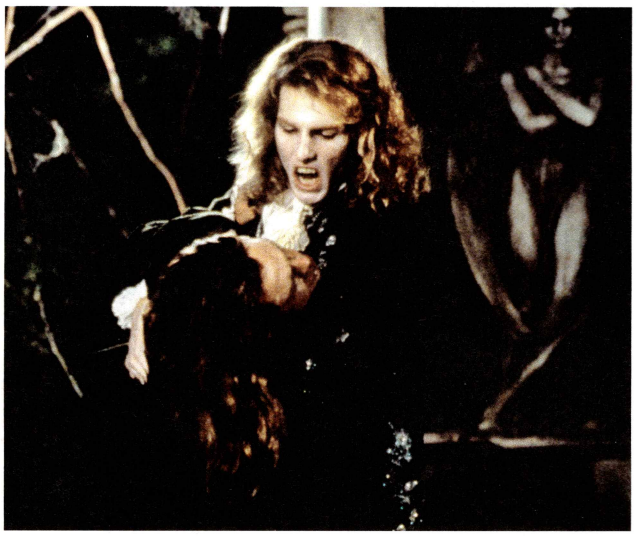




KRISTEN STEWART, ROBERT PATTINSON

The stars of the often smoldering *Twilight Saga* film series helped bring Stephenie Meyer's novels to huge audiences. *New Moon* (above, with Michael Sheen, Jamie Campbell Bower, and Cameron Bright) fittingly set a box office record for a midnight screening. Stewart herself is a fan of the undead. "I f---ing love me a vampire," she once said. "Vampires are a little dangerous..."





TOM CRUISE

Anne Rice (above), who wrote the novel *Interview with the Vampire* and adapted it into the movie screenplay, initially voiced disapproval of Cruise's casting by declaring him to be "no more my Lestat than Edward G.Robinson is Rhett Butler." She was right: Cruise had never before played a villain, much less a world-weary bisexual demon in a strawberry-blond wig. Asked to juice a rat like an orange into a wineglass, waltz with a corpse, and plant a terminal hickey on Kirsten Dunst's neck, he looks completely out of his element. The mission was indeed impossible.

THEDA BARA

From 1915 to 1920, this fiercely erotic sex symbol—born Theodosia Goodman in Cincinnati—reigned as moviedom's "vamp." Her signature role was the devouring "vampire woman" bent on destroying bourgeois family life in *A Fool There Was,* inspired in part by Rudyard Kipling's 1897 poem "The Vampire." In a 1950 reminiscence, screenwriter Adela Rogers St. Johns recalled that "audiences were torn between a fear of the Vampire and a wild desire to have some of her strange power rub off on them." Even Bara's stage name had a vampirish twist: It was an anagram of "Arab Death."

DWIGHT FRYE

As Renfield, the spider-eating, undead-worshipping lunatic who stows away on the schooner Vesta (a literal blood vessel) in the original *Dracula* (1931), Frye practically invented scorched-earth acting. He chews scenery even more flagrantly as the village idiot in *The Vampire Bat* (1933). Frye's unhinged laugh and neo-Expressionist style were aped by Nicolas Cage in *Vampire's Kiss* (1988)—Cage's rat-loving literary agent swallows a cockroach in homage.

WESLEY SNIPES

In *Blade* (1998), Snipes plays a half-human, half-vampire who suppresses his thirst for blood with garlic injections and battles the bloodsuckers bent on ruling Earth. Coming 26 years after the release of the blaxploitation pic *Blacula* (bitten by Dracula in the 1700s, an African prince is on the loose in 1970s Los Angeles), Snipes' Blade is the first credible Black vampire.

CATHERINE DENEUVE

As a bisexual vampire, the highbrow French actress takes turns chomping on her centuries-old boyfriend (David Bowie) and her modern-day girlfriend (Susan Sarandon) in Tony Scott's film *The Hunger* (1983). The sex that was implied in *Dracula* becomes overt in this iteration of the tale.

PAUL WESLEY, NINA DOBREV, IAN SOMERHALDER

The Vampire Diaries (2009-2017), a glossy adaptation of L.J. Smith's YA book series, was a kissing cousin of *Twilight*—only less tweeny and chaste, and faster paced. During its eight-season run on the CW, the pulpy soap opera featured emo-band dialogue about souls, brooding bad boys, and a particularly memorable turn by Dobrev, who played both the virtuous orphan Elena and her deliciously wicked doppelgänger, Katherine.

DOLLY WELLS

In the business of vampire hunting, the ballsy abbess played by Wells in 2020's period-to-present-day BBC miniseries *Dracula* is a formidable stakeholder. It's 1897 in Transylvania, and everyone's favorite blood-chugging count is drawing up his plans against Victorian London. The only human standing in his way is Sister Agatha Van Helsing, a cool, slightly sacrilegious nun armed only with a crucifix and a loose collection of folklore.

SARAH MICHELLE GELLAR

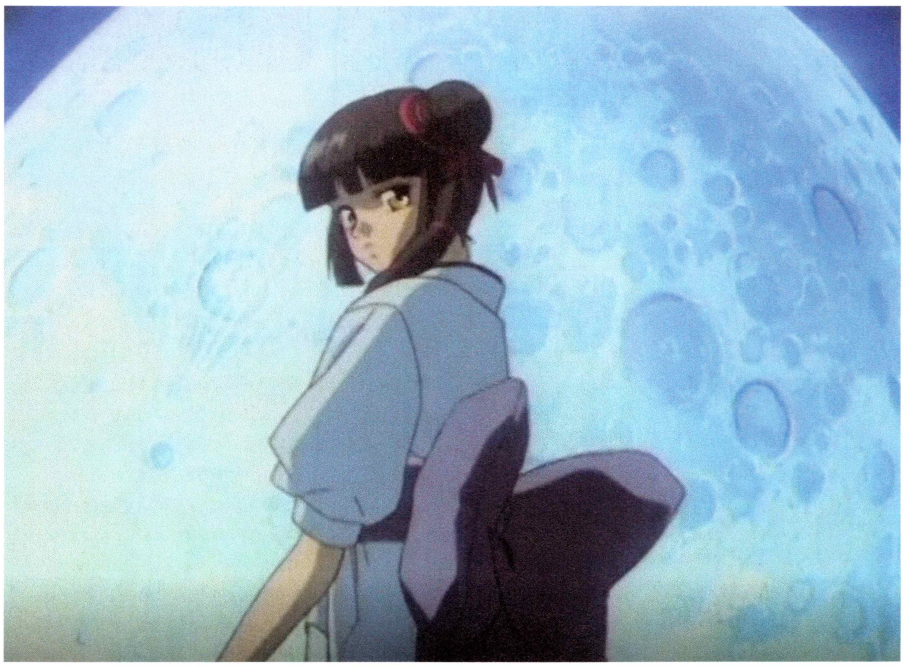
Over its seven-season run, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* nimbly handled undead allegories for coming-of-age conflicts and delivered what *Rolling Stone* labeled "wrenching pathos, meditations on life and death, examinations of power and responsibility, formal innovations like a musical episode and a nearly silent episode, and kick-ass action seamlessly combined with biting humor to the small screen." Gellar's Buffy was praised for her stare-down of steel and solid acting chops that matured further over the show's 145 episodes.

ALEXANDER SKARSGÅRD

On the HBO series *True Blood,* the 6'4" Swedish actor played Eric Northman, a vainglorious Viking-cum-vampire, with great brio and frequent nudity. Little more than eye candy during the show's first season, his undead sheriff cultivated a massive following and provided the heat that the *Twilight* series lacked.

LINA LEANDERSSON

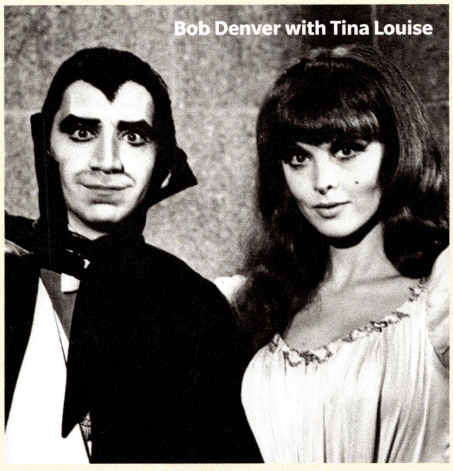
Released in 2008, the spectrally beautiful Swedish horror film *Let the Right One In* is a macabre story of a tentative romance between a bullied 12-year-old and the weird, ragged girl who lives next door. As the young, anemic vampire whose unending thirst has to be slaked at all costs, Leandersson is mesmerizing as a lonesome boy's obscure object of desire.



VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU

The star of the eponymous 26-episode Japanese anime TV series is an unwilling vampire who grants victims' dreams of eternal happiness while hunting down bad demons and posing as a high school student. Trapped forever in a teenager's body, the half-human, half-vampire can walk around in the daylight but must drink uncoagulated blood to survive.

FORGETTABLE TURNS IN VAMPIRISM


Bob Denver with Tina Louise

Johnny Depp

Mel Brooks

James Corden with Myanna Buring

Eddie Murphy

BOB DENVER
When a bat bites him on the neck in a 1966 episode of *Gilligan's Island,* the titular character is convinced that he'll morph into a vampire and moves elsewhere on the island to spare his fellow castaways. Like a vampire with advanced gum disease, the humor is toothless.

JOHNNY DEPP
A riff on the Gothic TV soap opera that ran from 1966 to 1971, Tim Burton's 2012 film *Dark Shadows* featured Depp as Barnabas Collins, an 18th-century vampire who awakens in the 20th century. *The New Yorker* weighed in: "Not so much a coherent movie as it is a long, expensive joke in search of a purpose."

MEL BROOKS
The director of the gut-busting *Young Frankenstein* sunk to the pit and pendulum of his career with the alleged vampire spoof *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (1995). Most of the jokes truly suck. Dr. Seward: "I don't understand it! He's covered in blood and there's not a drop on you!" Professor Van Helsing: "I have been to many stakings—you have to know where to stand! You know, everything in life is location, location, location..."

JAMES CORDEN
In *Lesbian Vampire Killers* (2009), the future host of "Carpool Karaoke" played a clown who gets fired for punching a child, goes on a hike, falls in with a camper-van full of busty foreign students, and spends a night fighting off a coven of, er, the undead. After describing his vampire-slaying performance as an embarrassment, Corden said that watching the film would be too harsh a punishment for prisoners.

EDDIE MURPHY
As a West Indian vampire in the hood, Murphy sleepwalked through a mausoleum full of bloodless gags ("I'm more of a night person myself!") in the lethally leaden horror comedy *Vampire in Brooklyn* (1995).

The True Blood of Charlaine Harris

A Q&A with the author of *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*—the books that spawned the HBO series *True Blood*.

Fans of Type-O romance novels who are hungering for something to sink their teeth into need look no further than Charlaine Harris's rollicking *Southern Vampire Mysteries.* Set in the mundane trailer-park and strip-mall landscape of northern Louisiana, the 13-book series brims with blood, sex, and fear. In 2008, the novels spawned the HBO series *True Blood,* which, fueled by the same campy eroticism and over-the-top fantasy, ran for seven seasons.

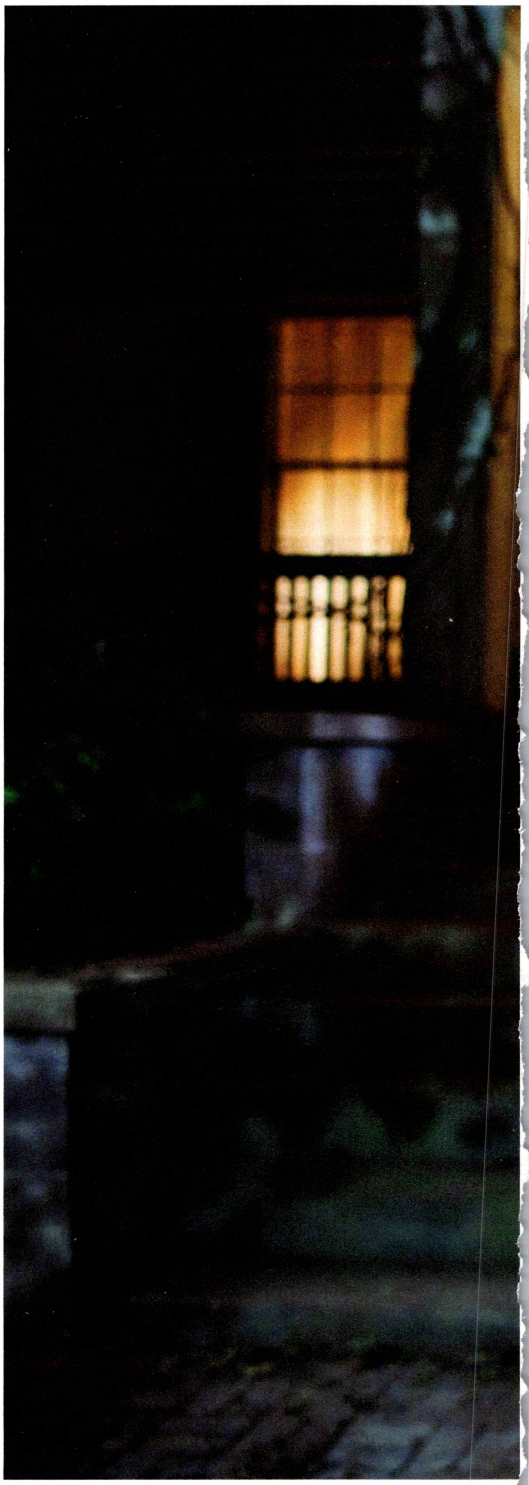
In Harris's dark, brooding world of the supernatural, a barmaid named Sookie Stackhouse is blessed with the ability to read human minds and cursed with an inability to stop their private thoughts from crowding her pretty head. Fortunately, the interior monologues of vampires are inaccessible to Sookie, which makes the creatures all the more intriguing—and arousing—to her.

When we first meet Sookie, the Japanese have just invented a synthetic blood, marketed as Tru Blood, which allows vampires to live openly among humans without the untidy business of having to drain them. Still, many people are wary of their neighbors, and women who have sex with the undead —often after hooking up at a vampire bar named Fangtasia—are disparaged as "fang-bangers." Fairies, witches, maenads, fire demons, vengeful ghosts, and shape-shifters are also in the mix.

Harris grew up in Tunica, Mississippi, a river town famous for Sugar Ditch Alley, a neighborhood of crumbling shacks named for its open sewer. Eventually she moved to small-town Arkansas with her husband, raised three kids, and wrote two largely unread mystery series, one of which featured a librarian turned amateur sleuth, the other a cleaning woman who investigates murders. In the late 1990s, she stuck her neck out to try vampire fiction. "I just felt like letting my imagination run away with me," Harris says from her new digs outside Dallas. "I enjoyed writing conventional mysteries, but I wanted to write a book that would allow me to let loose and show my sense of humor."

It took two years to find a home for the original Sookie book, *Dead Until Dark.* "People didn't know how to classify it," Harris says. "It was humorous and it was a mystery, but it had vampires, and it was about a woman who was telepathic." When she finally landed a publisher, her advance was a relatively measly $5,000. To her surprise, the book took off like a bat out of hell, and after the premiere of *True Blood,* she says, "it was like, kaboom!" *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*—all of which feature the word "dead" in the title—have been translated into 30 languages. "*Dead Until Dark* is in its 32nd printing now," the author says with a smile both innocent and diabolical, "so I feel like I was right to trust my instincts."

She's now a proud grandmother who, for all her knowledge of the occult, regularly attends services at her local Episcopal Church. "I'm not here to



CHARLAINE HARRIS IN 2010 (previous page). Her stories about the Louisiana waitress with telepathic powers became the hit HBO series *True Blood,* starring Anna Paquin as Sookie Stackhouse and Stephen Moyer as Bill Compton, a 173-year-old vampire who falls in love with her (above).

preach moral values," she says. "There's some of that in my books, and if you get it, great. If you don't, that's okay, too. Because I'm not a minister, I'm an entertainer." Though no parishioner has ever chastised her for writing about vampires and werewolves, the woman who bought her Arkansas house suggested that she have it exorcized.

Harris's new series of *Gunnie Rose* thrillers center on a hired gun who escorts vulnerable people and cargo in need of safeguarding. The saga, now in its fourth installment, unfolds in an alternate 1930s America in which Franklin D. Roosevelt has been assassinated and the United States has fractured and disintegrated. The country is divvied up among England, Russia, Mexico, and Canada, and highwaymen and packs of wild dogs roam the countryside.

How much has the literary vampire changed since 1897, when Bram Stoker gave us the ugly, animalistic Count Dracula? The personal habits of his Dracula were, to put it mildly, disgusting. He had sharp teeth and nails, and he crawled up the sides of buildings.

Mine tried desperately to fit into mainstream society—or pretended to—though it didn't work out especially well for them.

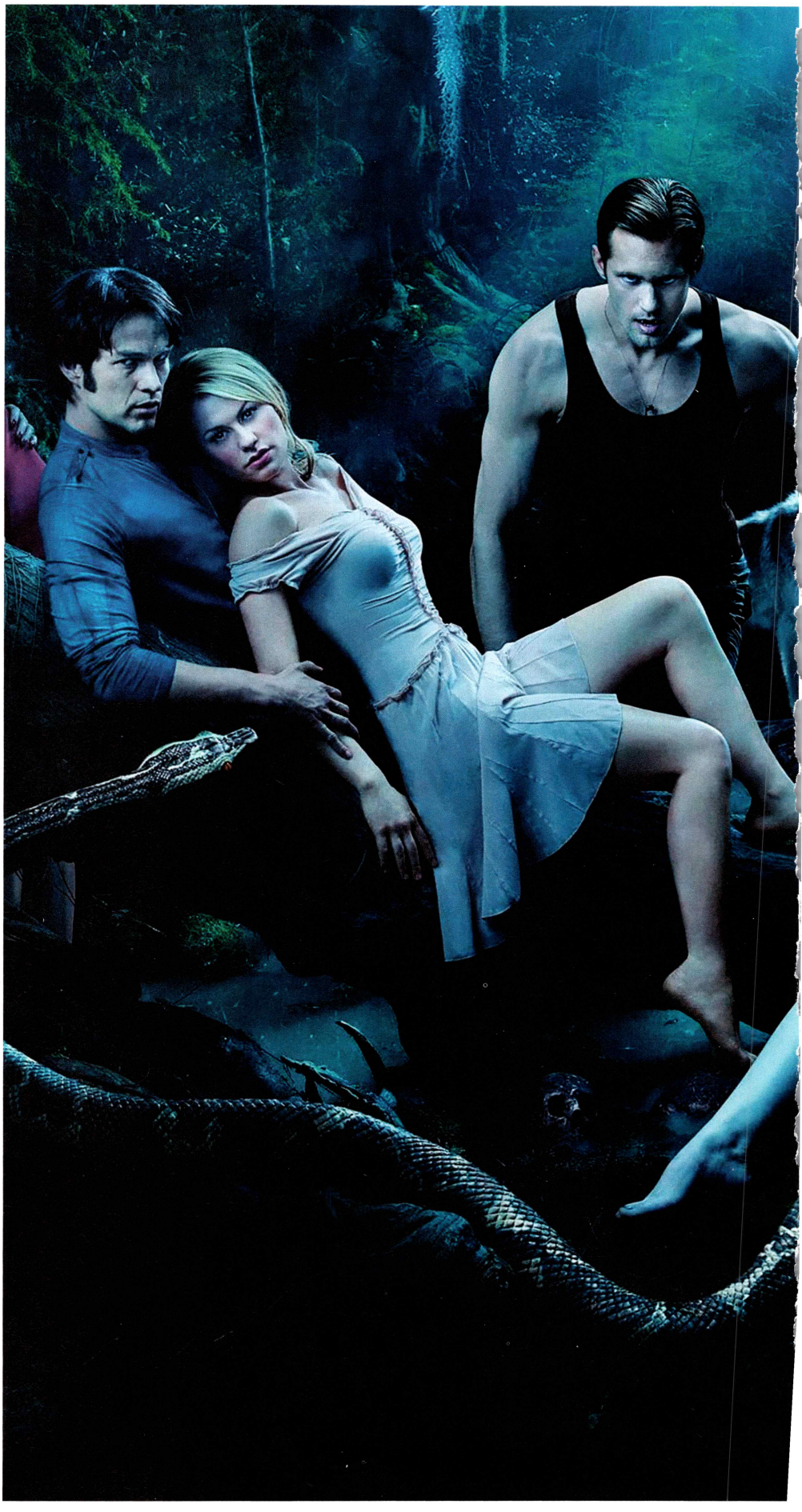
Your vampires can't be described as misogynists who prey on defenseless women. Excuse me, defenseless men will do just as well.

How much research did you do on the history of vampires in Louisiana? Any information you gather about vampirism is made up, and I wanted to make up my own world. So I more or less adopted the rules that made sense and would work in Sookie's world, and I discarded the ones that that wouldn't. I decided to keep the rule that vampires can't go out in daylight because I felt they had to have a limit to their powers and their ability to go places. If they're stronger than humans and they can kill humans very easily, there has to be a reason we aren't all dead.

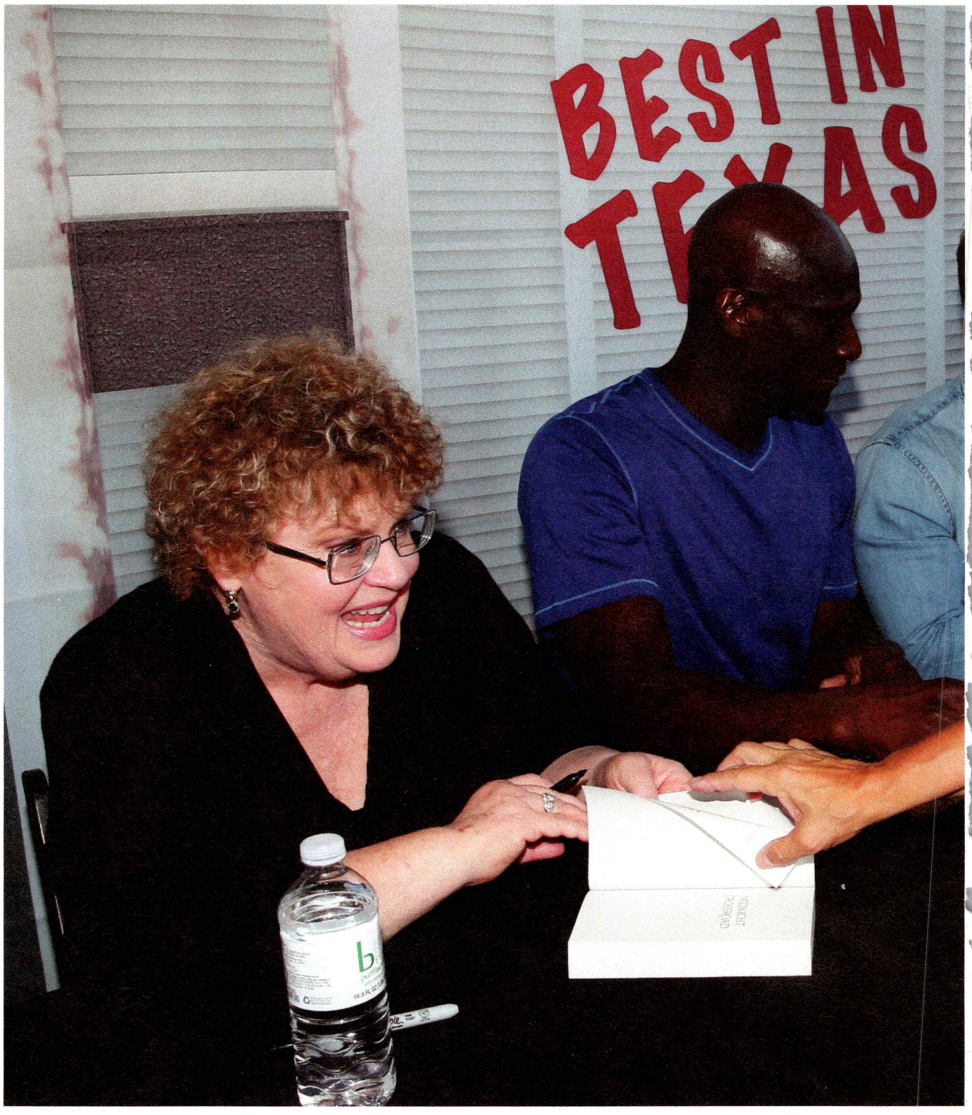
As part of your prep work, did you sleep in a crypt or hang upside down from the rafters of a belfry? Never. Not very practical.

How about protection against the undead? In your books, vampires are repelled not by old folk remedies like garlic, crosses, or holy water but by objects made of silver or fashioned out of wood, such as stakes and bullets. Actually, it was more like a common sense thing. I couldn't see why entering a church would do more than maybe make a vampire flinch, and I don't think holy water would do more than scare them. I just felt that vampires must be very strong. And I thought it would be nice if some of them could fly, so I threw that in. I had a good time picking and choosing which tropes would would work for the stories and which would not.

Why not mirrors? They worked on Dracula. I decided that the folklore about mirrors was based on stories that vampires told people in the event that they got accused of being one. They could always say, "You can see my reflection in the mirror, so I must not be a vampire."



***TRUE BLOOD*'S LIVING AND** nonliving characters, with Sookie (Anna Paquin) in off-white, along with, from left, Compton (Stephen Moyer), Eric Northman (Alexander Skarsgard), Sam Merlotte (Sam Trammell), Tara Thornton (Rutina Wesley), Jessica Hamby (Deborah Ann Woll), Jason Stackhouse (Ryan Kwanten), and Lafayette Reynolds (Nelsan Ellis).



How do you react to readers who aspire to be vampires and, say, get their incisors sharpened, dress up in Gothic clothing, and act out vampire rituals? It doesn't appeal to me personally, but I think that living a life of fantasy is very attractive in a lot of different ways. That's just not my particular fantasy. I try to make it clear to readers that dating a real vampire would not be a barrel of fun. Sookie only dates them because she really has no choice, and it's just a crazy thing to do. But people go for the drama rather than the reality.

It's been said that the great allure of vampirism is hot vampire sex and eternal life—since they don't age or decay, they can live forever. Do you agree? Not necessarily. For instance, in Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles,* the vampires can't have sex. And they don't want to. I think it was really more in terms of always being at the peak of your physical being. In this plastic-surgery culture, Americans are prone to wanting to look younger, be younger, and feel younger, and I think vampirism is probably an ideal of that. People love the notion of immortality. But watch the original Dracula film, *Nosferatu,* and you'll see that living a long life isn't necessarily glamorous. It's really kind of grisly and awful.

Is it true that you moored the Sookie tales in the prosaic boondocks of northern Louisiana to set them apart from the Gothic opulence of Anne Rice's New Orleans? Sure. Anne took the really romantic southern part of Louisiana, and I took the anti-romantic northern part. I made my vampire world the opposite of hers and had fun with it.

Is Sookie's ability to read the most unpleasant thoughts of others your way of reflecting on the veneer of courtesy that informs Southern living? I was trying to think of some sort of magical or unusual disability for Sookie to have that would cause her to have to date vampires. And it seemed to me that knowing what other people thought about you would be the most crushing, painful thing ever. When I examined my own thoughts and realized how uncharitable they sometimes are, I thought, "Oh my gosh. What if people could read my worst thoughts about them?" You know, like when someone says, "Oh, it's so good to see you," and I'm going, "You don't really feel that way," or "Gosh, why did you think your hair would look good like that?" You know, you just have these thoughts and you dismiss them if you like the other person. But what if you could mind-read the person you're talking to? That would be so awkward!

So that's why Sookie's first sexual encounter is with a vampire? Yes. She can be peaceful around them. She doesn't know what they're thinking about her.

Yet some of the vampires are intent on killing her. Oh, sure. On the other hand, there's that beautiful silence.

Quick question: Bram Stoker or Mary Shelley? Probably Bram Stoker. Vampires have more appeal to me than Frankenstein's monster.

Jane Austen or Charlotte Bronte? My gosh, they're both so good. Charlotte Bronte is probably the template for the entire Romantic movement. So many elements in her books are echoed in every romance I read. But Jane Austen has the humor, and she's so sharp.

Bela Lugosi or Robert Pattinson? Two very different critters. I'd say Bela Lugosi. He had a lot more to work with in his role, and Robert Pattinson is way too young for me.

Many of your fans must have been infatuated with Eric Northman, a Viking vampire who was slightly over 1,000 years

HARRIS SIGNED BOOKS AT SAN Diego's Comic-Con International and autographed a book during the 2017 launch of NBC's *Midnight, Texas* (above). The thriller, based on Harris's trilogy of the same name, tells of a one-stoplight town that serves as a refuge for supernatural characters such as a witch, a vampire, a weretiger, and a fallen angel.

old and played in *True Blood* by heartthrob Alexander Skarsgard. Alexander Skarsgard fever was highly contagious. His fans happily ignored the fact that Eric was a murderer. He killed thousands of people. So maybe not the best choice for a boyfriend.

Where did the idea for a vampire bar come from? It just seemed logical. Vampires have to have a night job if they're going to work, and what's open at night? Bars are, and a restaurant wouldn't be too good for a vampire, since they don't really eat. Bars seemed like a really natural idea, especially since vampires would want to meet humans who wanted to be bitten, and humans would go to a bar that vampires owned.

Is there a modern writer of vampire romances that you recommend? I loved Jeaniene Frost's *Night Huntress* series, and she's just a wonderful person to be around.

Any book written by someone else that you wish you'd written? *Jurassic Park.* It's got everything: dinosaurs, people, dinosaurs and people, dinosaurs eating people...

Many novelists feel proprietary toward their characters. Was it difficult to watch *True Blood* and see yours going off in radically different directions? At first it was jarring, but I've had three TV series now, and I've gotten accustomed to that. They're going to do what looks good on the television.

How much did the characters change from your original conception? Toward the end of the run on HBO, the characters were quite different. The TV writers had a more overtly political agenda than I did. Then again, people read the books to find something different from what they saw on the screen. And as long as the books kept selling, I was fine.

Did your readers complain about the liberties taken with the texts? They asked me why I didn't stop it. I said, "Well, they have the right to change the characters if they want to. That's part of the deal." And since the show first aired, tens of thousands of viewers have come to the books.

Your readers seem pretty hardcore. Were they livid at *Dead Ever After,* the concluding novel of the series? That was really a dreadful time for me, because the ending of the book was leaked. A reader in Europe got an early copy and decided to share it with the world. And it was terrible, just terrible. A lot of people didn't see where I was going with the ending of the books, and they didn't like the decisions I made for certain characters. It was a very painful couple of months. But I got over it. I got a little tougher, and I was still glad that I ended the series, because I was ready to write something else. You've got to be excited about what you do.

I understand that you received death threats. I did, and people even put curses on me. A few angry readers left messages in which they said they planned to burn my books. I said okay, as long as you pay for them first.

How seriously did you take the threats? In the beginning, not too seriously, but after the fifth or sixth one, I got a little worried. Then I thought, well, nobody has actually shown up at my house, so it was more like they just wanted me to feel bad. I got a little concerned later on because there were threats against my children, which I think is absolutely out of bounds, morally, emotionally. Anyway, I got over it, and nobody came and killed me.

Any possibility of resurrecting any of your vampires in another series? It's possible. I don't think I'll ever write anything with Sookie in it—the ending of the final novel, *Dead Ever After,* was quite devastating, and she's been in my rearview mirror ever since. But HBO is talking about rebooting the show, and I've been thinking about it. There were a couple of characters I wouldn't mind writing about again if I had a really good idea, but that hasn't happened yet. ●

Some Friendly Forebears

A cool ghoul from Philadelphia, a Goth-garbed "Vampira," and others in a similar campy vein pioneered the lighter side of vampirism.

ACID

Long before Grandpa first gunned his Drag-U-La roadster down Mockingbird Lane on *The Munsters* (1964), before Count Chocula appeared as a cereal killer on breakfast tables (1971), before Count von Count contracted arithmomania on *Sesame Street* (1972), and before the storybook rabbit Bunnicula was accused of bloodlust (1979), a cheesy local horror host named Maila Nurmi made vampires kid-friendly.

The Finnish-born actress first rose from the crypt as Vampira on KABC-TV in Los Angeles in 1954 and in two beats of a bat's wings cultivated a cult following with a mostly juvenile audience. Accompanied by spooky organ music, she sauntered out of a fog in Gothic Morticia Addams garb, purring "I am... Vampira. I hope you had a terrible week" at the start of each show and "Bad dreams, darlings" at the end.

Though *The Vampira Show* barely lasted a year, it was groundbreaking, and the ground it broke was unconsecrated. Vampira established an easy rapport with children of all ages, whom she enlisted in a kind of conspiracy against seriousness. Suddenly, movie vamps were not just frightening but fun. Following in Vampira's wake—if not at her wake—was John Zacherle, a cool ghoul known, in the late '50s and early '60s, as Roland in Philadelphia, and later Zacherley in New York City. With his face caked in ashen sunken-cheek makeup, his tall, gaunt frame concealed in a long black frock coat adorned with a medallion from the government of Transylvania, he hosted

BACK IN THE 1950s, MAILA Nurmi (left and previous page) embodied a sexy proto-Goth take on the macabre, hosting her campy Vampira horror TV show. John Zacherle was Zacherley on *Shock Theater* (above). Known as the "cool ghoul," he dressed in a black frock coat, wore a medal from the Transylvanian government, and presented spooky, often silly late-night showings of B-grade horror and sci-fi films.

scruffy fright flicks broadcast on a show called *Shock Theater.*

Zacherle, too, was a television pioneer. During whatever horror film was airing, the undertaker turned vampire would pop onscreen at commercial breaks to comment wryly on the plot—and sometimes even had reaction shots of himself spliced into breaks in the action. He hosted out of a kind of crypt, and he had sidekicks. "There was My Dear, his wife, recumbent in a coffin with a stake in her heart, and his son, Gasport, a series of moans within a potato bag suspended from the ceiling," reported the *New York Times* when Zacherle died in 2016, at age 98. "A large blob of gelatin tied up in cheesecloth was Thelma, a high-strung amoeba who cheated at checkers and responded to the command 'Heel!'"

A premature Mister Rogers with a huge bloodcurdling laugh ("Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!"), Zacherle came on camera with hands dripping blood (chocolate syrup) and dragging a wicker laundry basket that supposedly contained a (never-seen) severed head. From his hip redoubt in his subterranean "ghoul school," he gave lessons in conversational Transylvanian. ("The skull of my aunt is on the table.") In Philly, *Shock Theater* first aired around midnight

on Mondays and Tuesdays, but teachers complained that their students were staying up to watch the show and then falling asleep the next day in class. Under pressure from parents, the station moved the show to weekends.

Zacherle messed with the minds of his young public by demonstrating the correct way to make spider soup, playing Pin the Fang on the Vampire, belting out selections from his opera *Draculare,* performing experiments with monster brains (cauliflower) and hearts (beef liver), and cracking wise: "A boy asks his mother: 'What's a werewolf, Mommy?' His mom says, 'Shut up and comb your face.'" Usually the gags were a great deal more entertaining than the scheduled feature, and the only reason viewers tuned in.

And those viewers tended to rampage like zombie hordes. Zacherle's first personal appearance turned out 14,000 screaming fans. After he announced that My Dear needed a new pillow for her coffin and asked his followers to each send in three hairs to stuff it, 23,000 letters arrived in the mail. His novelty horror–rock 'n' roll song "Dinner with Drac" (sample lyric: "For dessert there was batwing confetti/and the veins of a mummy named Betty") was a top 10 hit, selling 250,000 copies. Zacherley returned the puppy love at the end of every episode of *Shock Theater,* signing off with his catchphrase "Good night, whatever you are!"

"A boy asks his mother: 'What's a werewolf, Mommy?' His mom says, 'Shut up and comb your face.'"

In monsterdom, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and Zacherley begat a host of flatterers. The roster of "monster of ceremonies" successors included Svengoolie in Chicago, Gorgon in Dallas, Morgus the Magnificent in New Orleans, Sir Graves Ghastly in Detroit, Selwin in Indianapolis, Chilly Billy in Pittsburgh, Ghoulardi in Cleveland, Moona Lisa in San Diego, Dr. Madblood in Norfolk, Count Gore de Vol in Washington, D.C., Dr. Creep in Dayton, and, in L.A., Sinister Seymour, who was supplanted by the

CASSANDRA PETERSON, better known as Elvira, Mistress of the Darkness (below), was a sassy and brassy mix of Morticia Addams and a *Playboy* centerfold. She hosted shows that screened a range of low-budget horror and sci-fi flicks and appeared in a slew of films, including the recent *Happy Halloween, Scooby-Doo!* On *SCTV*, John Candy, Joe Flaherty, and Eugene Levy (right) performed in the show's *Monster Chiller Horror Theatre*, offering sketches that beautifully skewered the genre.

buxom, panda-eyed vampire Elvira. In 1988, Elvira (Cassandra Peterson) even got her own movie, *Mistress of the Dark.*

Elvira: "Bloody Mary."

Bartender: "No hard liquor served past eight o'clock. Do you want a virgin?"

Elvira: "Maybe, but, ah... I'll have a couple of drinks first."

Arguably the most inspired TV vampire presenter was Count Floyd, who appeared from 1976 to 1984 on the Canadian sketch comedy show *SCTV.* The persona of funnyman Joe Flaherty, this parody of a parody presided over *Monster Chiller Horror Theatre,* a fright-film showcase on a fictitious TV station (later network) in the town of Melonville.

Wearing a cheap vampire costume and speaking in an even cheaper Transylvanian accent, Count Floyd—a moonlighting Floyd Robertson, coanchor of SCTV News—was constantly apologizing to his kiddie audience because the movies his staff booked weren't really scary. Plus, the scary ones never quite managed to get to the studio on time. When the much-hyped hair-raiser *Blood-Sucking Monkeys from West Mifflin, Pennsylvania* went missing, he had to improvise the plot on the spot.

Many of Count Floyd's horror chillers starred Dr. Tongue (John Candy) and his sidekick Bruno (Eugene Levy) and required the purchase of Count Floyd's patented 3-D glasses (*Tip O'Neill's 3-D House of Representatives, Dr. Tongue's 3-D House of Stewardesses*). The 3-D effect consisted mostly of Dr. Tongue holding an object (such as a cat, a pen, or a snifter of brandy) and swaying it back and forth at the lens. In *Dr. Tongue's Evil House of Pancakes,* the spine-chilling object was a plate of flapjacks.

The vampires-for-laughs market has only grown—and become more animated. (See the long-running cartoons *Hotel Transylvania* and *Stakes,* and the Japanese horror manga series *Vampire Princess Miyu.*) Now, as then, biting humor can go a long way. ●

BITING WIT

For many years and in various veins, some less-than-menacing vampires have proven toothsome to children. *Sesame Street*'s Count von Count debuted in the early 1970s, around the same time kids started sinking their teeth into Count Chocula breakfast cereal. In recent years, the *Hotel Transylvania* franchise has been enlivened by voices such as Adam Sandler's and Selena Gomez's, while on *Vampirina*, little Vee Hauntley, a Transylvania transplant, has made a life with her family in the U.S. They live (inevitably, right?) in Pennsylvania.

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BLOOD RELATIVES

Grandpa, a TV vampire portrayed by Al Lewis, had clear predilections in the long-running series *The Munsters.* (Grandpa: "What smells so good?" Herman Munster: "I cut myself shaving.") Grandson Eddie was a werewolf. Explaining how he landed the role, actor Butch Patrick said: "Maybe it was because my fangs were my own teeth."

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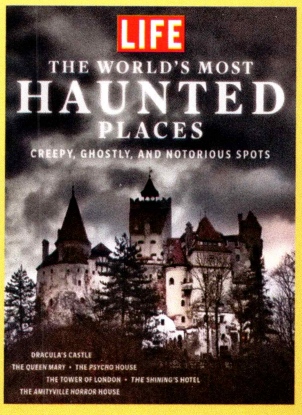

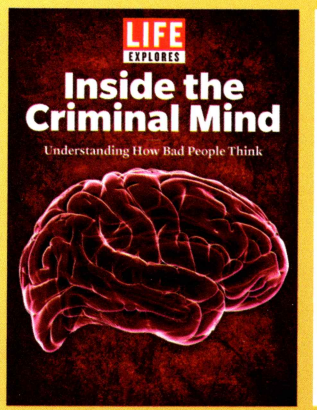

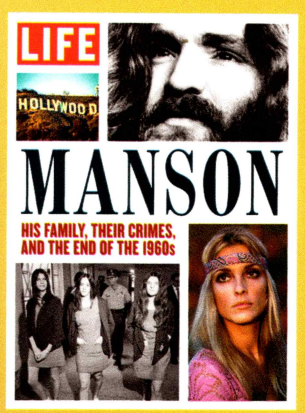

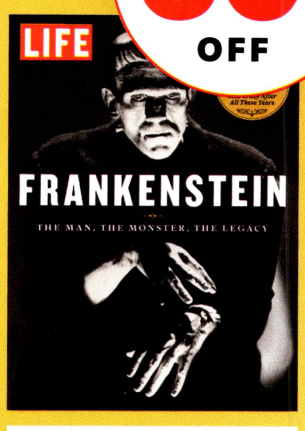

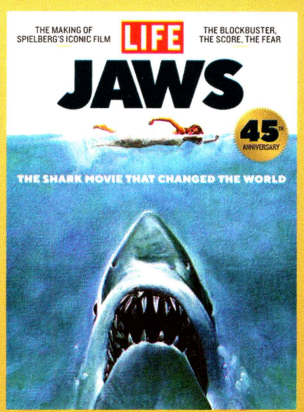

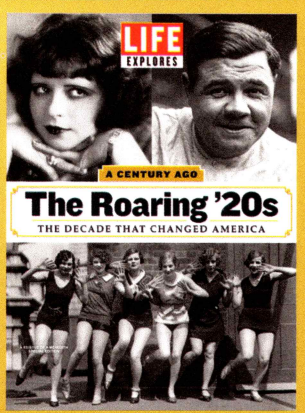

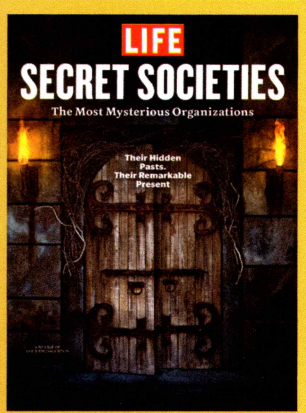

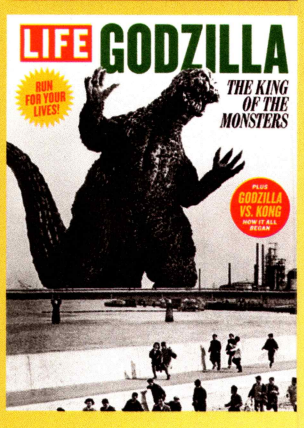

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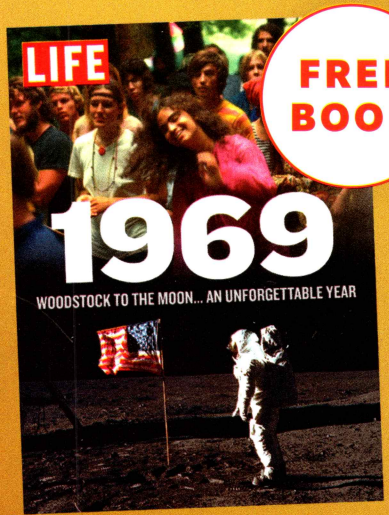

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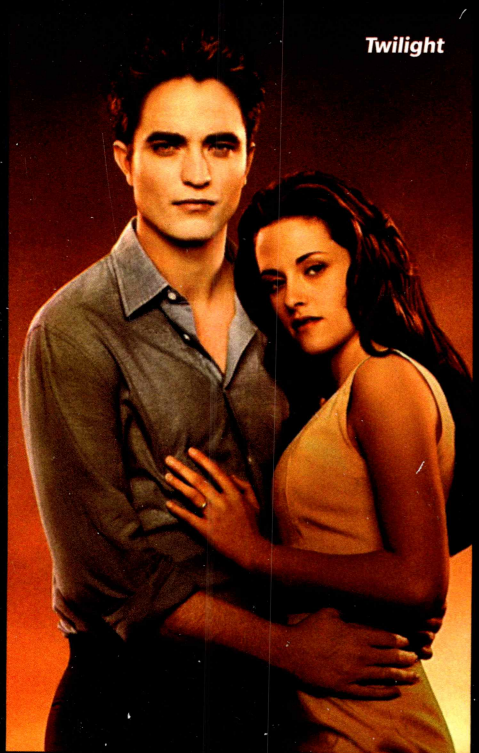

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